Azad Kashmir

The home of British Kashmiris

Waving flags of their countries of origin by some members of diaspora (overseas) communities in public space is one of the most common and visible expressions of their 'other' or 'homeland' identity or identities.

In Britain, the South Asian diaspora communities are usually perceived as Indian, Pakistani, (since 1971) Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans. However, there is another flag that is sometimes sighted on such public gatherings as Eid festivals, Pakistani/Indian Cricket Matches or political protests across Britain.

This is the official flag of the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). AJK or 'Azad Kashmir', in short, is a part of the divided state of Jammu Kashmir. Its future is yet to be determined along with rest of the state. As explained below in detail, Azad Kashmir is administered by and does not fall in the legal and constitutional jusridiction of Pakistan like Punjab, Sindh, Pukhtoon Khuwa and Baluchistan.

Pakistan is responsible for the development and service provision including passports for the people of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, another part of Kashmir that is not part of, but is controlled by, Pakistan under the United Nations resolutions following the invasion of Indian and Pakistan in Kashmir and the subsequent involvement of UN in 1947. Under the same UN resolutions India is responsible for the Indian controlled part of Kashmir.

In all parts of the divided Kashmir there are political movements of different intensity striving for greater rights and autonomy, self-rule and/or independence. The focus of this chapter, however, is primarily on Azad Kashmir, the home of nearly a million strong British Kashmiris.

Most of the social science researchers in Britain agree that about two third of British Pakistanis are

actually are from 'Azad' Kashmir[1]. There are up to 300 families[2] from the Valley of Kashmir. While, the focus of this chapter is mainly on 'Azad Kashmir', the discussion on the historical processes that produced and shaped 'azad Kashmir' offers some insight to the Indian occupied part of Kashmir, especially the history of popular politics.

Also in terms of labour migration to Britain, which had been mainly from Azad Kashmir, as discussed in the chapter on British Kashmiris, the earliest Kashmiris in Britain according to the available record were from what is now Indian controlled/occupied/administered Jammu Kashmir[3].

This chapte offers an introductary understanding of Azad Kashmir. The first section includes a brief overview of culture, politics and economy of Azad Kashmir. This is followed by a quick analysis of the emergence of popular politics in 1930s. In the next section some more history is offered before

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[1] For details see Ballard, R; Kalra V.S. (2000); Ali N. (1999)'; Khan, Z et al. (1990) and Saifullah, V. (1976)

[2] Converstaions with the British Kahsmiris from the Valley. Also See Siraj, M.A. (1997) ' Desolation or Peace', Minerva Press London.

[3] Ther terms used for the Indian and Pakistani occupied parts include administered or controlled or Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) or 'Azad Jammu and Kahsmir' (AJK) depending on ones political ideology. However, Indian and Pakistani Administered Kashmir is the widely used term by the international media and academia considering it as a relatively more neuteral term. While technically that might be the neuteral term in practice India and Pakistan have been treating Kashmir as an occupied country and the governance systems are colonial like hence the use of terms 'Indian occupied Kashmir' and 'Pakistani Occupied Kashmir'.

coming back to the Kashmiri governments formed in 1947 of, which one was 'Azad Kashmir'.
In concluding part, some thoughts are also shared about the future prospects of this part of the divided Kashmir state.

AZAD KASHMIR: *the notion and practice*

"Azad" (آزاد) is a Persian word, which literally means free. In "Azad Kashmir" the word, Azad is a political concept and means Free Kashmir. Free here is not in the sense of asking someone else to free something (demand) but it means that this part of Kashmir actually is free or liberated and is not un-free, occupied, controlled, or subjugated by any power other than Kashmiris themselves[4].
It appears from the official Pakistani and 'Azad' Kashmiri history of this part that the notion of 'freedom' has been used here within the framework

[4] The concept of power here is not used in religious or spiritual or theological sense where the ultimate power is not on this earth but somewhere away in this universe from where the life on earth is controlled and managed. Power is used here in terms of politics and administration. While there is a tendency in some sections of Kashmiri and Pakistani politics to strive for political power in the name of Allah, the term political power here means the power which flows through organizations, institutions, processes and practices consisting of people at different levels of the society and with various objectives and interests through an infrastructure of policy making and executing certain roles and responsibilities.

of 'two nation' theory rooted in religious or some would say communal notion of the nation'. This perception of 'freedom' of 'Azad' Kashmir asserts that its Muslim population was freed from 'Hindu' Maharaja and later from Hindu India, which occupied the rest of Kashmir that remains to be freed.
In this context the 'free, Azad' part of Kashmir was also declared 'base camp' for the 'Freedom Movement' to liberate the Indian occupied part of Kashmir state. We grew up in 'azad' Kashmir listening to this Anthem in our schools assemblies.

'Kohistano Kee Abadi
Pehan Chuki Taj e Azadi
Izzat Ke Parvaney Jagay
Azadi kee Shama Jaladi
Tum Bi Utto Ahel e Wadi
Zaamin Hai Allah Hamara

A literal translation reads something like this:

The population of mountains has been crowned with the freedom;
The moths of honour have woken up and lit the candle of freedom;

You too rise up O! The people of the Valley (of Kashmir) God will bless you with his support.

Since 1980s the prompting of 'rise up Oh! The people of the Valley' has been changed with 'the Valley has risen up' …

However, as discussed below, while the rhetoric of 'liberating Kashmir from Indian occupation' been officially flamed up in this 'Azad; Free' Kashmir, its own freedom remained debatable from very early years since 1947. While most of the symbols and infrastructure of independent government exist in 'Azad' Kashmir, these institutions have no power and authority for legislation and execution. The power lies with the rulers of Pakistan rather than with those of Azad Kashmir.
In this context the claim of 'Azad' Kashmir being *Azad* (free) is a contested one. The pro-independence Kashmiris view this part of Kashmir as 'Azad' or free only in name but 'Ghulam' (subjugated) under Pakistani occupation in practice. The situation was appropriately summed up by Mr KD Khan, a Muzaffarabad based lawyer as bellow:

The Pakistani bureaucracy is the real administrative power, the ISI and the Pakistan army exercise coercive power. Moreover, under the constitution, the elected representatives are subservient to the Kashmir Council controlled by Pakistan. High Court and Supreme Court Judges can only be appointed by approval of the Ministry of

Kashmir Affairs in Islamabad. The Minister of Kashmir Affairs can dismiss the PM (of Azad Kashmir), *as can the Chief Secretary-another Islamabad appointee. Under Article 56, the President of Pakistan can dissolve the Legislative Assembly. Surely, this is a truly unique form of self-rule*[5].

Those who view Kashmir through two nation theory lenses and ask for accession to Pakistan or a religious Islamic Kashmir on the basis of Muslim majority claim that this part of Kashmir was liberated by the people of Azad Kashmir especially of Poonch and Mirpur from the yoke of Maharaja System that was based on the exploitation of Muslims. From this perspective, the 1947 rebellion was the war of liberation and present day 'Azad' Kashmir was liberated from the Hindu Maharaja rule.
Recently another discourse has been developed by some British Kashmiri activists that the government that was 'announced' on 4th October was 'established' on 24th October 1947 and originally this was an 'Azad' meaning free government. Its independence, howver, was curtailed later by the Pakistani rulers both the civilians and military dictators.

[5] See http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11156/section/5 for a detailed analysis of AJK government and the nature of AJK and Pakistan relation

Indeed recently, the newly introduced Civil Society of AK has also started demanding radical change in the relationship between Pakistan and 'Azad Kashmiri'[6]. At the same time, voices for autonomy and self-rule are gradually becoming stronger across the division line in Kashmir and Kashmiri diaspora across India, Pakistan and across the world. These voices are also forging some links through an increased interaction in real and virtual spaces.

One of the most interesting developments concerning the political reforms and empowerment of Azad Kashmir over the recent times is the support by pro-independence camp to the autonomy and empowerment demands by the Azad Kashmiri rulers. The Jammu Kashmir National Independence Alliance (JKNIA) called a special meeting on this issue and its recommendations were later developed by the Jammu Kashmir Writers Forum led by Shafqat Raja who compiled the proposal and along with Sadiq Subhani of Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP) presented to the Azad Kashmir cabinet members on their visit to Britain in November 2012. Till November 2013 when these lines are written no progress is visible on reforms.

[6] http://tribune.com.pk/story/401767/pak-azad-kashmir-arrangements-more-powers-to-ajk-government-urged/

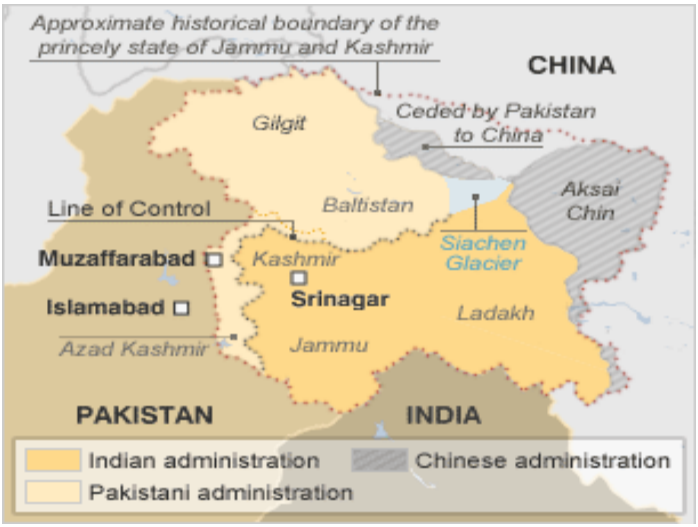
Shafqat Raja (JKWF) and Sadiq Subhani (JKNAP) presenting reforms proposal to Azad Kashmiri cabinet members at a public function in Stoke on Trent

Area and location

Prior to the division in October 1947, the Kashmir state consisted of three provinces namely Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh including Baltistan. The Gilgit Agency and Poonch regions were additional/distinct components for some time before their merger in mid 1930s. The entire state covered an area of 2, 22,236 sq. KMs or 84,471 sq. miles. In area Kashmir state, in its entirety is larger than 86 out of nearly 200 countries the world.

Main regions of Kashmir before division

The invasion in 1947 left all three provinces and Gilgit Agency divided under Pakistani and Indian occupation. China captured some territory from India during 1962 war and Pakistan presented China with a chunk of State territory in the same year.



Divided Kashmir State

Azad Kashmir forms the southwestern part of the State and covers an area of 13,297 square kilometres or 5,134 sq. miles. It is separated from the Indian occupied part of Kashmir by 700 km long line of division or 'ceasefire' line that runs through the Jammu, Kasheer and Ladakh provinces[7] on the Eastern side of Azad Kashmir. To the West lies the Pakistani province of Khyber-Pakhtoon Khwa and to the north Gilgit-Baltistan region of Kashmir directly occupied by Pakistan whereas the Punjab Province of Pakistan is situated on the south of Azad Kashmir.

[7] There are political groups in Gilgit Baltistan region that would like to call this province Balawaristan or Baloristan and would like to incorporate it in the united states of Kahsmir as 'Blore-Jammu-Kahsmir' or BJK.

Population

In the last census of Azad Kashmir carried out in 1998, the total population of the region was counted at 2.973 million. This was estimated to have been grown to 3.4 million by 2004 and based on that today it is estimated over 4 million. Up to two million Azad Kashmiris are settled in various countries of the world mainly in Britain, Europe, Middle East, USA and Canada[8]. A significant Kashmiri diaspora is also present in Pakistan both from Pakistani and Indian occupied Jammu Kashmir. One dozen members for Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly are elected by Kashmiri diaspora in Pakistan from Peshawar to Karachi. Population density in 'Azad' Kashmir is estimate at 343.5/km^2 (889.8/sq. mi). Currently one member for Azad Kashmir Assembly and one for Kashmir Council are selected from the global Kashmiri diaspora.

Administrative and Political structure of Azad Kashmir

Internally Azad Kashmir is organized into three administrative divisions including Mirpur, Poonch

[8] Over half a million in Middle East, about a Million in UK and about half a million in Europe, Canada, USA and other countries including South Africa amd Malayan countries

and Muzaffarabad. The divisions are further divided into 10 districts and 30 sub districts or Tehsils. Local government is made up of 11 Municipal committees, 2 municipal corporations and 201 union councils with nearly 2,000 villages[9]. The elections for local bodies have not been held since 1991.

Political Structure

Theoretically, Azad Kashmir is a combination of presidential form of government and parliamentary democracy where President is head of the state and Prime Minister is the Chief Executive. The legislative assembly is made up of 49 members of which 41 are directly elected by the citizens of azad Kashmir and eight are elected by the assembly members. The breakdown of this assembly is as follow:

Elected from within Azad Kashmir	29
Elected from Kashmiri diaspora (Refugees) in Pakistan	12
Women	05
Overseas (Diaspora) Kashmiris	01
Religious Scholars	01
Technocrats	01
TOTAL	**49**

[9] For details on administrative setup see http://www.ajk.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=24&Itemid=8

The following political parties are allowed to participate in elections:

1. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference
2. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League.
3. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Peoples party.
4. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation League (JKLL)
5. Azad Kashmir Mutahida Qoumi Movement (MQM).
6. Azad Jammu and Kashmir Jamat E Islami.
7. Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Party (JKPP)
8. Azad Kashmir Tehreek e Insaf.
9. There is a newly formed group called Kashmir Public Rights Party which has not participated in elections as yet.

The political parties and pressure groups that are not allowed to participate in elections because they propagate the politics of independenet Kashmir include:

1. Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)
2. Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP)
3. Jammu Kashmir Peoples National Party (JKPNP)
4. United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP)

5. Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Conference (JKNLC)
6. Jammu Kashmir Freedom Movement (JKFM)
7. Kashmir National Party (KNP)

Above this seemingly autonomous executive structure there is another executive body, the Kashmir Council. This council has a total of 8 members from Pakistan and seven from 'Azad' Kashmir. It is chaired by the Head of Pakistani state with the President of Azad Kashmir as vice-chair. It has six ministers from Pakistan including Law and Justice, Foreign Affairs whereas the minister of Kashmir affairs is also a member as an ex-officio. The 'Azad' Kashmiri members include the prime minister of Azad Kashmir or his (no her as yet) nominee and six members elected by Azad Kashmir assembly. While almost all members of the Kashmir Council are elected by the Pakistani and Azad Kashmiri assembly, the council is not accountable to either of the houses.

Ironically, the Kashmir Council was created by the government of People's Party of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the firstever democraticalaly elected government of Pakistan. This was created as part of the Interim constitution of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' drafted by the ministries of Law and Kashmir Affairs of Pakistan in 1974 hence commonly known as Act 74.

The Council is final authority over everything of any significance in Azad Kashmir and is described by Azad Kashmir High court as 'Supra power' and its decisions are not subject to judicial review. One former prime minister of Azad Kashmir said 'Azad Kashmir is a government by the Pakistanis for Pakistan[10].

The status of Indian occupied and Pakistani occupied Kashmir was summed up by a prominent politician from the IOK who asked for anonymity. In his words 'the ironic situation about this slogan of liberating Kashmir from Indian subjugation is that it is raised by a government whose prime minister is controlled by a major of Pakistani army where as we in the IOK are also controlled but by the rank of a Major General'[11].

On top of that, (or perhaps deep down) there are the ISI and IB networks with deep penetration in the lives of people in AJK and possibly in diaspora. The dissident voices are discredited through a range of means including accusations of being Indian agents or Dehrias (athiests) and those who speak out are threatened with dire consequences. Sometimes some people are picked up and tortured and some are disappeared for being out of line[12].

[10] For details of the Pakistani interference and control over 'Azad' Kashmir see the Human Rights Watch titled 'With Friends Like These … Human Rights Violations in Azad Kashmir on http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/pakistan0906/index.htm.

[11] Private conversation

[12] While these lines are being written the whereabouts of the head of Azad Kashmir Raja Munir who filed a case in Pakistani court regarding disappeared people in AJK are not known. He is allegedly picked up by the Pakistani Agencies.

Due to this strong grip of Pakistan over Azad Kashmir some pro-independence Kashmiris argue that in practice the Azad Kashmir is not a free, democratic and civil government but a tool that is used by the Pakistani civil, military and intelligence forces to play their monetary and military games. Indeed some Kashmiri activists compare the relationship between 'azad' Kashmir and Pakistani with that of the Brotish and their coonies.

Social Composition and Diversity:

Baradaries, clans and class

Materially the territory of Azad Kashmir is connected through a road network across this 4500 square miles stripe of land. These roads take you to and through dozens of cities and towns across all the districts and sub districts busy with the trade of daily life commodities and services. In between, you come across beautiful state and private buildings, mansions, medium size plazas, diverse range of mosques, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals and shrines. All these are product of, and remain part of, a crisscross of social relationships both horizontally and vertically. This is like any other society however of course far less complex and busy than such cities as Karachi Bombay or London.

I have never visited the whole of Azad Kashmir but whatever areas I could visit and whatever

information I have it appears that land is no longer forms the primary and main mean of production and livelihood.

However, this was different in the united Kashmir, especially before the migration of Azad Kashmiri labour first to UK then to Middle East and USA and recently to Europe. Before migration, all commercial, social, political and cultural relationships were rooted in the land. Because of migration the relationship with, and of, land changed fundamentally.

Starting with social fabric this section offers a quick overview of the nature and evolution of Azad Kashmiri society in the recent past.

The social fabric of Azad Kashmiri society is comprised of a diverse network of social relationships. These relationships can be studied and explained in various forms and layers. There is the traditional form of networking based on kinship (blood relations or lineage) organised into clans and baradaries. However, over the recent centuries and especially after the migration to western countries, relationships that are more formal organised into professions, business networks and general economic status and wealth defining the class position can also be noticed. Let us look at the baradarie first.

Baradari: *system and ism*[13]

Baradari برادری is a Persian word, which literally means brotherly support, solidarity and unity. It originates from the word baradar that means brother. In Pahari, the word for Baradar is Paraha and the term Parahadari donates same meanings as brother and brotherhood respectively. Sometimes the term baradari is equated with or used interchangeably for 'Caste' in India associated more with the Hindu religion and some commentators from Islamic perspective tend to argue that South Asian Muslims inherited this from their Hindu ancestors[14].

Others argue that baradari system had its roots in the hunting and feudal societies that shaped the production relationships into the baradari system rather than a product of any religion[15]. Religion (in this case Hinduism) accepted these socio-economic formations around kinships and most of traditions that were product of the local needs and requirements of the time.

[13] To avoid reinforcing the stereotyping of British Kashmiris it must be noted here that baradrie or catse system has existed throughout the history and across the world. For details see Naseem, F and Ahmed M (2011), A comparative study of sub-continent in Berkeley Journal of Social Sciences Vol.1, No.1, Jan 2011

[14] Shahabudin, S. (2004), 'Zaat and Biradari' available at http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2004/01-15Sep04-Print-Edition/011509200447.htm

[15] Sir Danzial, Ibtson, (Trans), Castes in Punjab, Lahore, Fiction House, 1998, p.148 in Nasim and Ahmed (op. cit. p: 4)

In Britain while the system is traceable in most South Asian communities, it has recently become synonymous with British Kashmiris from Mirpur. Here it is being stereotyped into a system of 'friends-and-neighbours' and a "hierarchical system of clan politics dominated by connections and family ties to Mirpur[16]." It is a "close-knit and insular, [system that] … places the demands of the extended family above all else. Individuals are subordinated to it, and behaviour is regulated by the concepts of honour and shame, which inhibit actions that might threaten the cohesion and self-identity of the family[17].

However, a quick look at the baradari system and baradari-ism amongst Azad Kashmiris and continuity and change following resulting from migration and settlement in Britain would show that the above percetions of 'Baradari' amongst British 'Mirpuris' are rather too simplistic.

As it happened throughout the human history and all over the world, the roots of baradari in Azad Kashmir can also be traced in the system of production and ownerships at different stages of human development. However, as illustrated further below while discussing economy of Mirpur, baradari boundaries, prejudices or inequality in

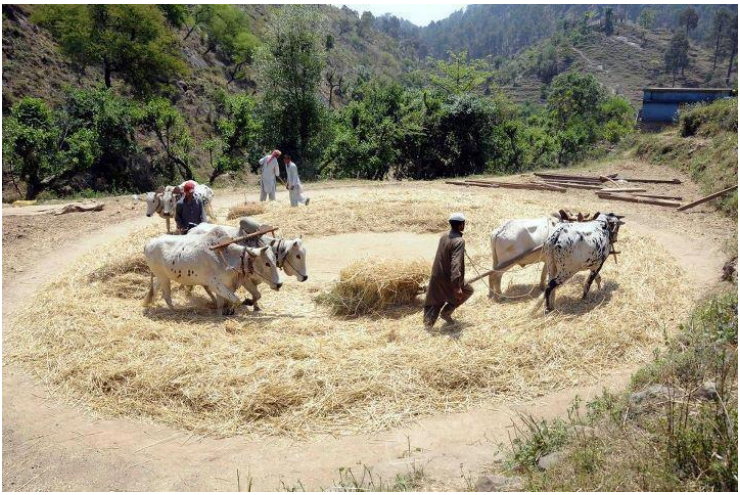
[16] Glhermine (2012) Bradford West (UK) by-election 2012 available on http://welections.wordpress.com/2012/03/31/bradford-west-uk-by-election-2012/

[17] Anshuman A.M. (2009), British Islam after Rushdie, Available on http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/britishislamafterrushdie/

Mirpur and generally in Azad Kashmir has not been as absolute and rigorous as in Pakistan say in Punjab where landholdings remains far greater in size than in Azad Kashmir. In Azad Kashmir, it seems that baradaries represent more the remains of the kinship relations associated with, and organised, in Clans and Tribes rather than based on landownership.

However, this is not to undermine the land ownership that certainly plays a crucial role in determining ones social status in the local socio-political context. While discussing baradari, in my view, a distinction has to be made between Baradari system and baradarism.

Baradari system is a form of social organisation roots of which can be traced in the agricultural mode of economy where collective labour was required to carry out the production and protection tasks.



Over many centuries, the organisation evolved around the blood relations that developed into different social spheres and layers of production responsibilities or professions or baradaries. Evidently, different baradaries can have the same lineages or ancestries if traced back systemically into history. Therefore, baradarie is a phenomenon that emerged at a certain point in social evolution.

The migration of labour from Mirpur to Britain has not been exclusively a baradari phenomenon but baradari certainly played a significant role in the development of migration into chain migration and also in coping with the challenges and problems of settlement in British society by providing finical, social and emotional support at the times of need.

Currently the following major landed baradaries can be identified in Azad Kashmir:

Jats
Gujars
Rajputs
Maliks
Sudhans
Abassis.

These are all landed baradries with Rajputs having the 'ruling' past. However, since 1947 Sudhans, Jats and Gujars have also been ruling Azad Kashmir through Muslim Conference or Liberation League or Peoples Party etc. Also land ownwrship has changed since the migration to Britain and Middle East and many amongst the previously non- landed baradries now own more land than many of the traditional land owning baradries.

The other category of baradaries includes those who have evolved around their professions and skills rather than landholding. These include Kaasvis (weavers) Mouchis (cobblers; shoe makers) Nahee (Barbers; hair cutters) Tehlis (Oil Pressors), Kamhaars (potters), Mistri (masons) Tarkhan (joiners). Some of these later changed to Mughals, Janjuas, and Satis and so on due to the stigma attached with theur baradarues in the pre-migration economy.

There are also those baradries that are sometimes collectively lumped under 'Kashmiris'[18] because

[18] For some who try to understand Kashmiri identity in Azad Kashmiri context only and through linguistic and cultural lenses this remains the cause of a great confusion about Kashmiri identity as a national political identity of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This aspect is discussed in detail in the articles on identity in this collection.

their ancestors migrated from the valley of Kashmir in different eras of Kashmir history long before and after 1846 when the present day areas of the state were formally handed over by British East India Company to a local war lard[19]. They alsp include Ansaris, Khawajas, Mirs, Dars, Mirza's and Lones etc.

Titles

Then there are titles, which are sometimes, confused with baradaries. Most common of these include Chaudhary and Raja. It appears from conversations with elders that the title of 'Chaudhary' is related mainly to the landowning but to those land owners who were responsible for revenue collection from a cluster of villages' and represented them to the courts of a Raja that literally meant 'ruler' and represented the ruling elites or *Sarkar*, the government. In this respect, Chaudhary was the representative or leader of a particular community usually consisted of few villages and Raja was the formal part of the government.

Theoretically, anyone from any baradari could have been Chaudhary or Raja. However, practically they (rajas and chaudharies) belonged almost exclusively to the landed baradries. In Mirpur division, the main chaudhary baradaries

[19] Details about the formation of the state is given further ahead in this article.

include Jatt, Gujar and Bainse.[20] Since I am not qualified to offer an analysis of the baradaries in Poonch and Muzafarabad divisions, I have left that for another time.

Another title is 'Shah' that in Azad Kashmir is commonly referred to sayyid clans originating from Banu Hashim clan of Prophet Mohammed PBUH. In its Persian origins, it means king and Shahanshah as great king or king of kings almost in similar meanings as Raja (ruler) and Maharaja (the great ruler or ruler of rulers).

Baradri-ism

Generally, baradarism can be defined as the politicisation or (ab)use of baradari affiliations, relations and sentiments for political purposes. In Azad Kashmir, the traces of popular political baradarism can be seen in the early 1930s when the popular uprising won people of the state their first modern elections in 1934.[21]

[20] Historically a Baince is a Rajput but in Azad Kashmir used the title Chaudhary. Recently some of the more aspiring Bhainces have started using the title Raja which is seen by some as more 'Royal' than Chaudhary. It is also claimed thathistorically Gakhar Rajputs and Bainse Rajputs fought over the control of Mirpur and when Ghakkars took the control they did not accept Bainses as their equals and the later owned the title of Chaudhary (Gupta, B.K. 2011)

[21] This does not mean that there was no baradarism before the emergence of modern poltics but I am not qualified to discuss the forms and nature of baradraism before the popular political era.

One example of this, which I became aware of through conversations with elders of the baradari I belong to, was the election of Mirpur district, which at that time also, included Bimber. Prior to the elections the Raja baradari had access to more power than all other baradaries because Rajas shared baradari identity with the ruling baradari of Dogra Rajput, the Maharaja. However, in Mirpur the Muslim Rajas who shared power with Maharaja did not recognise Bainse Rajputs as Rajas hence excluded them from prestigious government posts and privileges including recruitment or promotion in army beyond commissioned officer ranks.

One such case was of Mr Neik Alam of my village Mohra Loharaan who was also my relative – husband of my grandmother's (Dahadhi) sister. According to the family tale, he was refused commission in the army for not belonging to Raja Baradari that was an essential requirement. His plea that he belonged to Bainse Rajput clan was rejected for not having relevant documentation to back it up. However, according to the story Bava Neik Alam went to Bainsewara that is considered the original home of Bainse clan and managed to attain relevant papers to prove his Rajput lineage. Subsequently Bava Neik Alam gained commission

in army and Bainces were accepted as Rajputs in the Jammu Kashmir State.[22]

However, in political field Bhaince were more associated with Zamindars rather than with Rulers and carried the title of Chaudhary than Raja. Since in Akalgarh, the title of Chaudhary was also used by Jats, here they were supporting the Jat against Raja candidate in 1934 elections. It seems that in this case the common grounds in which the interests and solidarity rooted were their profession of farming or *Zamindari* than the baradari.

Rajas approached the leaders of Bainse including Chaudhary Mahasahib of Akalgarh and asked for their votes on the baradari basis. However, Chaudhary Mahasahib and other leaders of the Bainse baradari decided to vote for the Chaudhary Abdul Karim, the Jat candidate who won his seat. This tendency of using baradarai in election politics seemingly grew stronger with every election since 1934. Currently it appears that every election is also a contest between Party and baradari. However, it would be wrong to claim that all votes are casted on baradari lines but it is

[22] Later Bava Neik Alam was promoted to the rank of Captain and was retired after the division of Kashmir as Major with several awards and medals for his role in the war against Maharaja Forces that is a story for another time. In our village Mohrra Loharran the name plate of Major (late) Neik Alam Fakhar e Jang Sher e Kashmir is displayed on the wall of his house.

evident that the candidates do play the baradari card during their campaigns. To an extent, it can be understood in relation to the race and now religion card played by some political parties in Britain.

It would also be wrong to assume that baradaries are the only or even the main driving force in the life of Azad Kashmiris. The 'modern' networks and identities such as political parties, regional ('Azad Kashmiri') or national political (Kashmiri) and in Britain especially the Mirpuri identity have grown to contest or to encompass or incorporate the baradari identities. In some situations, however, both in UK and in AJK, the baradari affiliations can be seen in conflict with the wider political identities where Kashmiri as well as Pakistani or even some times the religious Muslim identity also feels uncomfortable with the baradari identities.

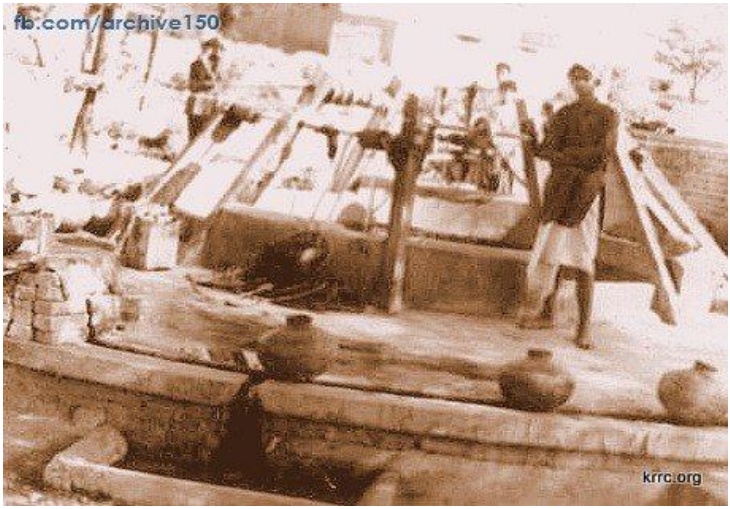
Religion and Azad Kashmiris

Historically, up until 1947 Azad Kashmir was also a religiously diverse region with majority Muslim population but a significant numbers of Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. In terms of influence, power and wealth, the Hindus were at the top followed by the Sikhs. They all lived side by side with clear and mutually accepted and respected religious identities and boundaries. Friendships, commercial interaction, socialising i.e. attending weddings and funerals, helping each other at the

time of need etc. were the spheres that transcended the religious boundaries.

However, this does not mean that religious based tensions, prejudices, discriminations and exclusions did not exist. One example from Mirpur that is common in the memories of the pre-47 generation of Azad Kashmiris seems appropriate to illustrate the extent and nature of religious coexistence.

In one of the neighbourhoods of Mirpur where Hindus and Muslims lived together there was only one well to be used by all for their water needs. Here the Muslims would stand on one side of the well to draw water (through the rubber container or *Boka* at the end of a long rope or *Lahah* as it was called in pahari) and Hindus on the other side from the same water of course.



The invasion of India and Pakistan in October 1947 changed all that. As illustrated further below, Muslims that formed majority in Kashmir state before 1947 were also over represented among the working or peasant classes. The ruling class consisted mainly of the Hindu and Sikh businessmen, landowners and government officials or bureaucracy. During the violent events of 1947, all Hindus and Sikhs in 'Azad' Kashmir areas were made to flee or killed without any real records available[23]. Subsequently no Hindu or Sikh lives in this part of Kashmir. However, there is a small population of Christians who are mainly employed as sweepers and on other very low paid jobs.

If we look at the role of religion in the daily life of people after 1947, it appears that religion has different roles for different groupings at different levels of the society hierarchy.

Primarily almost every individual believes that God is all-powerful and merciful and all knowing and fair and just and whatever happens does so because of him. In one word, God is equated with Qismat. Further exploring would show that God is

[23] Recently two books by the survivors offer some isnight into these horrifying events in Mirpur and Muzaffarabad. One by Krishna Mehta 'Kashmir 1947' focusing on Myzaffarabad and by Bal K Gupta 'Forgotten attorcities: memoires of a survuvors of 1947 partition of India' (2011) focusing Mirpur. The story of the massacre of Kashmiri Muslims in Jammu city and surrounding areas has been told by Khalid Hassan, 'Memory Lane to Jammu' 2004.

also 'the chance' and 'the nature'. *Qudrat* is the word for that. Khuda Ki Qudarat (God's jurisdiction and power) or Allah Ni Marzi (God's Will) is the phrase used for all those happenings that are perceived as beyond perception and beyond control of human beings. To have this Qudarat and Marzi in one's favour there are scores of means to be pursued. Dua (pray) and Darbar/ Khangah (Shrine) are the most prominent. In the local terminology, those who believe in the role of Dua and Darbar are called Sunnis and those who do not are known as Wahhabis. The third sect is Shia that according to local perception emphasises the role of Ali and his family more. Many elders would claim that historically when Moulvis (imam or mosque leader) were locals and volunteers meaning they did not receive salaries, all sects lived side by side comfortably with little tension and very rare clashes. However, since the imams have been hired (mainly from Pakistani cities) the sectarian identities have been significantly politicised and greater tension can be felt between different sects each of whom claims to be the only true Muslim. Some sects use Kashmir Issue to raise the slogan of Jehad to muster support for their particular political party. However, local population at large is not in favour of sectarian politics or sectarian politicisation of Kashmir issue. The notion of a Kashmir with respect for all religious and sectarian identities is still a very

strong one and more young people inside Kashmir across the division line aspire for Kashmiriyat based diverse Kashmir rather than a theocratic state.

Women and Azad Kashmir

Historically the role and status of women in what is now 'Azad Kashmir' had not been much different from other agricultural tribal regions of the world. There had been unwritten but clearly understood spheres and boundaries of participation. From my own memories, I can recall that women of all baradaries played a significant and proactive role in social and economic life of our village and surrounding villages.

The stereotype amongst British women rights campaigners and in the wider society about the domestication of 'mirpuri' women is a British phenomenon. In the village in Mirpur where I grew up women were actively involved in different forms of economic and cultural processes. A typical day for the farmer woman started long before the Azaan; call for prayer, with cleaning the house and sweeping the animal section, putting the waste in the head basket; *Tukkrah* and carrying that out on head to throw in the fields to be used as compost. On way back some would bring some *Kanday* literally thrones but actually dead branches of trees to be used as fuel for cooking. Men who

usually got up before women would by this time ploughed land for few hours and ready for breakfast which women would carry on their heads on second trip or by another woman of the household who will also sort the unwanted grass and other plants from the ploughed field while the man is having his breakfast. She would come back home and prepare breakfast for the younger ones and then washing up and getting water from the well before carrying any 'Pahanji Bartan' issues which usually involves visiting any relatives for any *matam*; bereavements also known afsoos;condolence or *muvarakh*; congratulations also called *puchch* (literally means 'asking') for birth or employment or any other happy news or occasions.

Then cooking for the lunch but in many households in most peasant households lunch consisted of some onions, *marrch*; crushed chillies and *chapatti* so cooking was mainly for the evening meal. In exceptional cases women also tilled the land.

Culturally women were at the forefront of singing (*gaaliyaan*) on weddings and crying (*Bainaa*) on deaths. They were also expected to identify right matches and arrange marriages. Their main daily socialising took place on the way to and back from well or during the breaks from work in the fields and around the *Tandoors*; chapatti making oven in

the evenings. Romance before marriage and even after marriage was not welcomed in public but of course happened and was particularly linked with the wells and dates were usually organised in the woodlands or broken lands around the wells. Of course, such occasions as weddings and while visiting relatives and working in the fields also provided opportunities to the willing ones to arrange some time for them.

Only few women of my mother and grandmother generation had the opportunity to attend school or read and write at home. These lucky ones were mainly the daughters of high-ranking army officers or some families of big landowners. For example in our Akalgarh region the earliest 'educated' women belonged to the (relatively) big landowners Bainse baradari including the daughters of Chaudhary Mahasaab family, Babu Gulab family and Major Neik Alam family.

Earliest women teachers were from these families and called 'Aapaa'; literally taken to mean sister but do not know exactly which language it originated from. May be this was to do with the 'Aap' of Gojari language that means 'Me' or I, as opposed to 'You' in Urdu that these ladies were the earliest who tried to speak. The Kasavi / Weavers or Bhatti and Mistari/ Masons baradaries of Akalgarh were also amongst the earlier educated and educators. Bava Bhatti of Akalgarh perhaps

was the earliest education campaigner in our town.

The education opportunity for the rest of the women was limited to reading Quran and the basic Islamic books written in Pahari such as *Pakki Ratti* (literally means *chapatti*), *Noor Nama, and Maraaj Nama* etc. Some also could manage to learn Qisa Yousaf Zulekha and Saif ul Muluk. Since Qisa Yousaf Zulekha and Saif ul Muluk are love stories, some of the strict religious Muslim Moulvis would discourage women reading these like today if they could they would discourage women watching Indian Movies etc.

According to information provided by some elders, some men such as Moulvi *Danddey Wala* (Moulvi Baton) monitored women in the Mirpur 'city' and chased off those who entered the city without *parda* (hijab). Hijab at that time (1970s) had two main forms. One was full *Burqa* also called shuttlecock usually black but in some cases white covering woman from head to toe with some small holes in front of eyes and nose. The other and most common form of parda was *chaddar* taken overhead and wrapped around the shoulders. Some young women used to wear only *cheela* (a small piece of cloth taken on head but not wrapped around like *chadder*). Therefore, the diversity of views on and practice of parda was a feature of society then as it is now.

Of course, things have moved on significantly since 1970s and women education and employment and participation in public life in Azad Kashmir have grown many folds. Interestingly the role of women who migrated to Britain in 1970s went through radical changes. Here they became completely dependent on their men and were initially confined inside their homes. However, gradually this too has been changed and that generation has created a world of their own around social traditions and rituals as well as around new outdoor duties such as school rounds and shopping and lately walking around the blocks and parks.

While domination of men is still evident, the role of women in Azad Kashmiri or amongst azad Kashmiris in Britain is not as passive and subdued as it sometimes is assumed by 'modern' women rights campaigners.

Languages

While a detailed discussion of linguistic development in the Kashmir state is not in the scope of this article, it seems appropriate to mention that Pashachas and Nagas are considered the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir and they spoke Pashachi and Broshiski[24]. During the course of

[24] Bamzai, P.N.K. (1994), 'Cultural and Political History of Kashmir', MD Publications, New Dehli

five thousand years of Kashmir history dozens of other languages must have been born and died in different regions of what today is known as Kashmir State. However, this needs further exploration[25].

Currently the main languages include Koshur or Kashiri, Dogari, Gojari, Pahari, Pothwari, Kishtawari, Broshiski, Sheena, Ladakhi, Balti, Punjabi, Urdu and English. Kashmir was the first ever state where Urdu was made official language in 1905 replacing Persian by Maharaja Partab Singh.

While Azad Kashmir is generally considered as a Pahari speaking region, there is a large Gojri community and some pockets of Kashiri especially in Neelam Valley regions. Hindku and Punjabi are also spoken in Muzaffarabd and Bhimber areas respectively adding to the cultural diversity of this region. Urdu enjoys the official status with a significant number of English speakers as well due to the close links of Azad Kashmir and Britain through migration and a million strong Azad Kashmiri diaspora in UK. The Pahari language is also called Mirpuri, especially in UK while many Poonchis of 'Azad' Kashmir would argue that it is Poonchi[26]. For details of development of Pahari in

[25] Some Azad Kashmiri language activists such as Dr Mohsin Shakeel and Ali Adalat claim that Pahari language of Azad Kashmiris has its origins in Pashachi.

[26] Kashmiri, S. "Kashmiri Quom aur quomiyatein aur nay Kashmir mein unki Hasiyat"

Britain, please see the article in British Kashmiri section in this collection.

Education in Azad Kashmir

Education here means formal transfer of knowledge and reading and writing skills in formal institutions like schools, colleges and universities. While the Neelam Valley area of Azad Kashmir is the abode of Sara Swati the goddess of knowledge, and home of Sharda Peeth that is considered as one of the ancient most seat of learning or University in South Asia[27]. It seems that at some point of 5000 years old history of Kashmir the survival of body became a priority over mind. However, this does not mean that society as a whole became illiterate. It seems that formal teaching gradually reduced to oral teachings by the older generations through verbal stories etc., the writings of different scholars and philosopher poets can be traced in different parts of Azad Kashmir throughout the Maharaja period.

Zaman Chan and Mian Mohammed Bakhash are the most known poet philosphers of the recent years along with dozens of others who wrote poetry on social, spiritual, religious and rarely political aspects of their surroundings.

[27] Stein, M.A. (1892) in Ghani, K.A. (2009), 'Sharda Tareekh Ke Irtaqahee Marahail (Sharda: evolutionary stages) VeryNag Publishers, Mirpur, Azad Kashmir.

The communal version of history taught in Azad Kashmiri Schools while stresses on the backward and illiterate position of Muslim during Maharaja Period (1846-1947) fails to mention that this was continuation of the previous eras which included several Muslim rulers as well as Hindus. Anyhow, by the years 1947 some formal and modern education institutions were established including High School of Mirpur Shehr (city) that was later promoted to College.

After the division of Kashmir and formation of Azad Kashmir the number of, and access to, primary and secondary schools has gradually risen and presently one can claim that every nook and corner of Azad Kashmir has access to school. However, the quality of education remains an area that needs serious attention and lot of work to

meet the present day local and global requirements. Recently higher education institutions have also been improved including new women university and medical colleges. Once again, it can be claimed that there is a good infrastructure for education. However, the education quality needs serious improvements to be able to communicate with the world.

Economy

Before, the development of migration to Britain into a 'Chain Process' in late 1950s, the economy of 'Azad' Kashmir had been pre-dominantly agricultural, where the land was the major source or mean of production. All of the food was produced from the land for local consumption and included various crops, fruits, vegetables etc. Land was also the source of other livelihood items such as wood, fuel, grazing for animals, which then turned into dairy products. Because of this land was also the main source of revenue for the government. Subsequently land was also a status symbol in the society in general.

The population was divided between landed (or those who owned or tilled land) and landless or those who did not own or tilled the land. The landless sections (*Ghair Zameendar*) of population adopted various professions and skilled labour to gain access to the produce of land owned by the landed sections (*Zamindars*). Thus, the produce

was also used as currency in this barter economy by landlords to pay for the services of artisans such as hair cutting, shaving, joinery, tailoring etc. The artisans provided their skills to the landed households and received food in return. This was certainly the case in rural areas or in *Graan* meaning villages. The identities of Zamindars (Landed) and Ghair Zamindars (Landless) or Choudhary (landlord) and Kami (worker) were rooted in this relationship of production. Rajas were involved above that in helping monarchic government in managing both the Choudharies and Kamis and their production of course.

Saleem Rafiqi, a local poet from Mirpur nicely captured this in the following poem:

سڑن پتنگے لمبے کیاں؟

لمب دیے نی کنبے کیاں؟

بُلبل روئے کھیڑے دردوں؟

لوء چنے نی سنبھے کیاں؟

Why the moths burn themselves on the flame?
Why the flame of the lamp trembles?
What pain makes nightingale cry?
Why the light of moon goes away?

میں اے رمزاں سمجھ نہ آیاں

نہ میں ڈونگیاں سوچاں لائیاں

مھاڑا دل پکھلوں پرچان

گڑنے کھوہ کی راگ سنان

یا جاں کُڑیاں چرکھے ڈھہان

رلی تے مِٹھیاں گالی گان

پہانویں سمجھ نہ اچھن بول

فیر وہ جیوڑا گچھے ڈول

I never understood these mysteries
Nor did I try to go in their depth
My heart is like a fragile butterfly
I hear songs in the water wheels on the wells
Or when the girls put their spinning wheels out
And sing in chorus
Even when I don't understand the words
Still they make my heart dance

کوئل بولے جاں کُوکُو

کُھگیاں آخن یوسف کھوہ
ادھی راتیں ٹُریا تھوری
بولے سدھ چھنکن کھنگرو
اے وازے دل مہاڑا کھسنے
جیاں کلیجے ہُسڑ اُٹھنے
مہاڑیاں سدھراں ایہہ ہی عام
ہک تے ہوئے جوغ چنام
اندر کوہلیاں دانے پھڑیاں
بھیڑے کھنی دریکی چھام
جتھے توڑیں گچھن نظراں
سر سر کرنیاں دسن فصلاں

Quail says Koo Koo
Doves say Yousaf Khoo (Yousaf in well)
The herders set off in the middle of night
They sing songs and bells of his animals ring
These sounds pull my heart towards them
The make me feel the heat in my liver
Such are my common aspirations
All I want is one pair of beautiful oxen
Grain stores filled with grain inside the house
And in the courtyard shadow of Nim Tree

Wherever eyes could see
They see the waving crops

میں کنکاں نے پسے لائے

ساری عمر کھلاڑے گا ہے

رہی کلھوٹی مہاڑی سخنی

دانے کنہی گئے لوک پرائے

میں اس جویں تھیں کجھ نہ کھٹیا

سارا چُھگا گالی سٹیا

فیر وی مہیش دلے کی پھبیاں

پُھڑے اے مہرے، کسیاں پیاں

کھلتے بائڑے، نِسریاں کنکاں

سدا منے کی چنگیاں لگیاں

پڑاٹ اے ٹھیماں تے سکروڑ

مہاڑیاں بانہواں وچ اِناں ناں زور

I raised the bundles of wheat
Chaffed the wheat all my life
My grains store remain empty
Strangers took my produce away
I did not earn anything from this land
wasted all what I had ّ
Despite all that my heart is full of love

For this broken land, open fields, water streams and hills
The standing crops of Millet and blossoming wheat
Always generred loving feelings in the heart
These sandy stones, ploughed fields and slabs
Their power is in my arms

بُڑھی ہوِہی باڑی آر سنگاری

رہی حیاتی ساری مہاڑی

خوورے دُنیا بدلی ہو سی

مہاڑی اُوے ہل پنجالی

میں بڑیاں نی ریت نہ چھوڑی

مٹی تھوں نہ آس تروڑی

I have been ploughed through
All my life
The world might have changed around me
But I have the same ploughing tools
I did not move away from the traditions of my elders
Never given up on my land

The socio-political structure that was built on this economy can be described as tribal with some feudal characteristics. The livelihood was almost

exclusively dependent directly or indirectly on land.

Therefore, the land became the symbol of status and power as well. Those owned land were considered superior 'Chaudhary' and had a variety of landless families of workers (Kamis) in the village at their disposal for various services including Hair cutting (Nahee; Barbers), shoe mending (Mouchi; Cobblers), oil-pressing (Tehli; Oil Pressers) tailoring (Darzi; Taylors), weaving (Kasvis; Weavers), Joinery (Tarkhan; Joiners), pottery (Kamhaar; Potters); Iron works (Lohaar; Smiths) and so on. However, land ownership in areas known today as 'Azad' Kashmir was not as big in size as in neighbouring Punjab or other big land ownership regions of British India (later India and Pakistan) therefore the social structure in Azad Kashmir although carried many feudal characteristics and practices was not as rigid and harsh as in Punjab. While clear distinction existed between landed and non-landed social groups, (*baradaries*) and landed baradaries certainly enjoyed the authority and power over non-landed baradaries and a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities along with a protocol of social interactions and status but the gap between landed and non-landed baradaries was not as wide and harsh as in Punjab. Indeed many landowner families cultivated the land themselves and struggled to buy services from above mentioned

skilled labour or artisans. The system of *Lehtar* (informal collectives of farming labour where farmers of a village or from surrounding villages get together to work collectively in turns for harvesting) was a common feature of this economy. Emergence of this mutual support system was more likely due to small land holdings. Socially the society was characterised by several layers of social groups or baradaries and clans linked with each other through blood relations or kinship. The extended family consisting mainly of three generations (grandparents; *dada Dadi*) and (grandchildren; *Potara Potaris*) formed the core of social structure surrounded by wider kinship networks that can be equated with clans or tribes having or believed to have common ancestors or blood lines. There is a common saying in almost every clan about the other clan that *'Unnan ni Nani Hikeh honni hai'* (their grandmother (maternal) is the same'). Several clans mount to a baradari.

Baradaries of non-landed groups were usually constructed around specific professions or skills like weavers, cobblers, potters and so on. Head of household was grandfather and heads of different households in a clan formed the leadership of that clan and heads of different clans in a baradari formed the leadership of that baradari. Of course, more active and clever ones of the heads and with those bigger landholdings had greater say and

power at the clan and baradari levels. This of course is only a quick and surficial overview and a more in-depth research can show more dimensions and levels of clan and biradarie dynamics.

Marriage, while necessary for the production of offspring and continuation of families, was also perceived as the most significant relationship other than the blood relations or kinship (*Lingerie*). Commonly the first choice for marriage was between first cousins and if *rishta* or match was not available in first cousin circle then second and so on.

Organisation and execution of marriage was also an occasion when the pride or 'Pagg'; turban of the family or clan was to be projected and strength of relationships to be tested. Death was another such occasion when all the kinship relations were to be put to test.

Since marriages and deaths were occasions of large gatherings which needed to be fed and looked after they required extra expenses, especially marriages where items not available for barter needed cash payments. For these two occasions, there emerged the socio-economic institutions of *'Saghaat'* and *'Nehndra'*, which were paid in cash. Saghaat was usually small amount paid by all who attended the funeral but necessarily by relatives and friends. *Nehndra* on the other hand was relatively higher amount depending on the

closeness of relationship and affordability. However, it seems that this system of mutual support within different clans and baradaries could not provide for all the members. Some families either out of mismanagement or for other reasons had to look outside the family and clans for the cash when it was required. This more likely gave birth to the initial form of notorious banking, Sahookara or the moneylending system.

In the present day Azad Kashmir, especially in the migration areas moneylending was carried out mainly by the Hindus who predominately lived in Mirpur city. This practice had the features of modern capitalism's loan sharks. The rates of lending money were such that once borrowed it was very unlikely for majority of borrowers to be able to pay back the actual amount for generations. Usually the payments were in the form of grains at the harvest time. At this point the moneylender would visit the fields of their clients and 'assess' the standing crop before it was harvested. This practice was called '*kann*'. For example if I owed money to the moneylender (or Mahajan or Sahookar or Lala as it used to be called) he (never heard of a she moneylender at that time at least) will come to assess my standing crop and say this will give 200 kilograms of grains. He will then say he should be paid 20% of that which is 40KG. Now even if the actual grain from

that crop is 100 KG I have to pay him 40Kg and not 20Kg as the 20% of 100 would come to.
Since majority of the peasants were not very clever in business deals and were too overwhelmed by the issues related to their meagre living and family and tribal lives, they were vulnerable to the manipulation of clever and sharp money sharks. I am not aware of any data available on the scale of money lending but know through elders and through such books as 'Dastan E Yousaf', the biography of Ch. M. Yusuf of Dadyaal that hundreds of families had their lands mortgaged to the moneylenders. However, it is also traceable in the public discourse especially amongst those with living memories of the era that the last Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh introduced amendments to the 'crookie' or bailiff law, which made it illegal for moneylenders to take away the items of basic needs from the homes of their debtors.

Mirpur City: *the cradle of industrialization massacred and drowned?*

The village economy in all parts of Jammu and Kashmir, like most of the agricultural economies, was linked with the cities through a constant two-ways flow of commodities. In the morning a typical villager would take goats, sheep, milk, butter or fuel wood or handmade baskets or Bahaaris; sweeping wickers to sell in the city and return

home in the evening with grocery, clothes, shoes or other products. In between and above this economic structure existed the government mechanism of taxes and revenue collected through local officers including Zaildars and Numberdars etc.

Mirpur city represented a similar picture. Araieen baradari of Mirpur also known as Maliyaars were especially famous for growing fruits and vegetables in the place called *Chahngaan* on the shores of River Jhelum to the north of Mirpur *sheher* 'city'. The fruits and vegetables, according to the elders i spoken to, were healthy, tasty and sufficient for local consumption.

It appears from these conversations and some very rare photographs of Mirpur and avaiolable literature that the city was built on a hill top that was three miles long and two mile wide at 1,080 feet above the sea level[28].

The Jhelum, Gujarat and Rawalpindi districts of Punjab were in the southwest of Mirpur across the river Jhelum that formed the boundary with Punjab. Poonch, Jammu and Riasi towns of Kashmir were situated on the northeast side of the Mirpur district. Towards the north situated the Peer Panjaal Mountains and South the farmlands.

[28] See 'Mirpur Ki Tareekh ka eik Ahim Baab; An Important Chapter of Mirpur History' by Professor Wahid Qureshi, The Sorosh Magazine by Mirpur Colleg, and recently published 'Forgotten Atrocities' by Bal Gupta.

According to the legend that exists in local discourse and recently narrated by Gupta (2011) the name, Mirpur was given after two saints, MIRan Shah Gazi and Gosain BodhPURi.

Crops harvested here included wheat, corn, tobacco, lentils etc. Mirpur city had two parallel rows of shops mainly owned by Hindus but also with many Muslim shopkeepers and basic transport, health and education facilities[29].

A closer look would show the seeds of industrial development present in the then Mirpur especially in shoe making, weaving and pottery products.

A special shoe design made here called *Khussa* and special garment known as *Khaddar* were of very high quality and in great demand as far as the then British Indian (now Pakistani) towns of Lala Musa, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi. The pottery was another local product that had great potential to grow. The Tokkreys (baskets) and Bahaaris (sweeping appliance made of '*Sroot'* special grass plants grown around Mirpur) were other products that were sold by Mirpuri venders to as far as Multan[30]. As Gupta, (op.cit.) mentions

[29] For details see Gupta, B.K. 'Forgotten Attrocities: memoires of a survivor of the 1947 partition of India', Lulu Inc. USA.

[30] No documentation is available to this author on the economy of old Mirpur. The information presented here were gathered through conversations with some British Kashmiris from their memories of the town including my father Sufi Mohammed Jan, grand mother Sahib Noor, Uncle Abdul Razzaq, Abdul Qayum, Professor Nazir Tabassam, Ali Adalat and Tariq Ajiz (late) and his mother.

there were flourmills, oil mills and printing presses that used 'either gasoline of Kerosene oil'[31].

Three Urdu dailies were published from Mirpur including *Sach*; The Truth, edited by Raja Mohammed Akbar and Master Roshan Lal, *Sadaqat*; Truthfulness, by Gian Chand *Chaudhri* and *Sharafat*; Nobleness by Bipin Gupta[32].

Mirpur before 1947

The invasion of Indian and Pakistani communal forces led by Tribal from Pakistan and Jansingis from India followed by regular armies resulted in communal cleansing of all non-Muslims from what is now 'Azad' Kashmir and hundreds of thousands

[31] Op. cit. P:34
[32] Ibid.

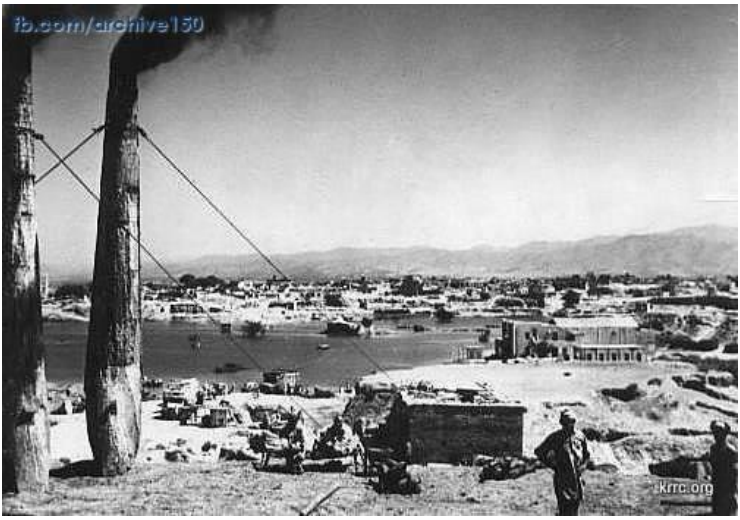
of Muslims from Jammu city and surrounding areas. Azad Kashmir became all Muslim area. The shops and properties in Mirpur city and surrounding villages were damaged and economic activity was rigorously suffered. However, soon the business was back to as normal as could have been. The properties and businesses left by non-Muslims were taken over by local Muslims. Not sure if those refugees who were forced to flee from Jammu were entitled to any of the shops or properties in the Mirpur city?

These forms of economy in Mirpur existed for centuries until 1960s before the construction of Mangla Dam drowned this ancient and third major commercial city of the Jammu Kashmir state with over 1700 acres of fertile land and nearly 300 surrounding villages. This second disaster within two decades certainly had fundamental and far-reaching effects on the economy and socio-political structure as well as psychology of the people of Mirpur. However, no study is available, as no research centre exists in Mirpur.

The submergence of Mirpur city and surrounding villages along with the large out migration to UK from Mirpur radically transformed the centuries old economic base and social structure of Mirpuri society[33].

[33] This cannot be said of other Azad Kashmiri towns especially those of present day Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions including, Bagh, Rawalakot and Sudhnoti etc.

Submergence of Mirpur city disintegrated and destroyed the centuries' old economic structure of Mirpur district, which at that time included Kotli and Bhimber. Over 100,000 people were displaced mainly the shopkeepers and business families of the city and farmers and artisans of surrounding villages. Economically, the agricultural base of villages and industrial seeds in the city were washed away by the Mangla Dam waters.



Mangla Dam waters flooded old Mirpur city in 1960s.

Due to lack of research on these areas I confine my analysis to Mirpur and that too on Mirpur city and surrounding areas. However, some of that can also be applied to Kotali that formed sub district of Mirpur at the time of Mangla Dam construction and also experienced large out migration to UK.

The situation soon developed into a new strong and prolonged push factor for emigration to UK that existed since 19th century. The migration to UK was accelerated and by the completion of Mangla Dam in 1967, the process of 'chain migration' became fully in place. For details, see the chapter on British Kashmiris in this collection.
From now on land in Mirpur was no longer the core mean and source of production (income). It was replaced with remittances that started flowing from UK to AK by late 1960s onwards. Agricultural activities dwindled down sharply and it became 'shameful' for the sons of landowning families in UK if their fathers were still tilling the land. Although ours was never a big landholding family even from local Mirpuri standards, I can recall my father pleading my grandfather in late 1970s to not plough the land anymore as it did not make economic sense and was seen as a painstaking labour which according to local moral values old people with sons in Britain should not be going through. 'I can earn in one month there what this land gives us in one year here. You are too old now for all this.' My father said to my grandfather. Although I could see that, my grandfather was not happy to give up working on land but I think his age and pressure from son left him with little choice.
I know from my observations and conversations that this scenario in our household was not an

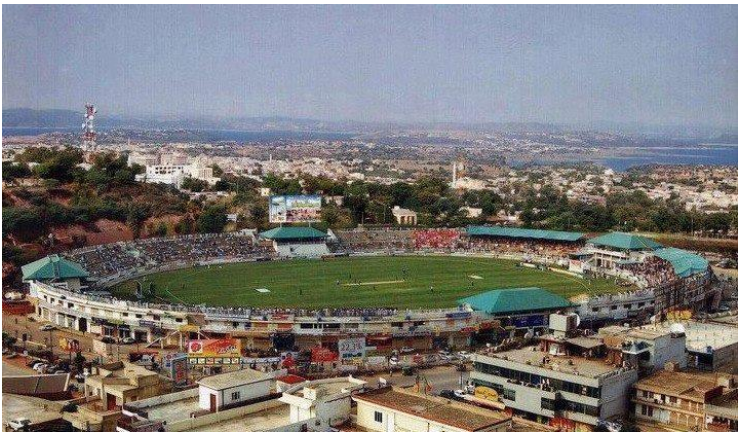
exception. Soon the land business took a new turn when land became a commercial commodity especially in new Mirpur city relocated at 'Bala Gala' few miles to the southeast of old Mirpur.

Migrant Economy

As noted above with flight from Mirpur of the Hindu business community followed by the disappearance of Mirpur City in Mangla Lake, the centuries old economy and the social structure built on that was fragmented certainly amongst the city and surrounding population. However, soon this vacuum started being filled by the migrant economy that has evolved over the past four decades through different phases.

The first phase was 'property and construction' boom both of which were interlinked. The property bit included a boom in the prices of land for building houses and shops, initially smaller but later on big houses and plazas. The construction activity created conditions for opening up relevant shops and stores. Today traveling from Mangla to Kotli, one can easily notice the rows of construction related shops and markets from Chitar Parri through New Mirpur to Kakra, Akalgarh, Chaksawari, Rajdahani, Naar, and Gulpur to Kotali. Dadyal, the epicentre of migration to Britain also has become a major centre of migration related economy.

This was then followed by 'Hotels' (Restaurants), sports shops, cloth markets and branches of various branded outlets from Pakistan. Travelling agencies remain growing which have now added currency exchange and car hire into their services as well. Private education and private health are two other most thriving businesses.



Mirpur Today

Recently, the Pakistani companies have opened up fuel stations with European style 'tac shops' along with private Pakistani banks, mobile agencies and mediascapes (newspapers, magazines, TV and Radio) have also taken up the Mirpur, Kotali and Bhimber markets of relatively high purchasing power due to global migration.

At the same time and perhaps connected to this new migration economy, a significant boom can be noted in 'mental health' and 'spiritual' economy of

Peers who like other fields are increasingly becoming transnational spanning from AK to UK. Another off shoot or 'side effect' of the money market has been the growth of glamour (parlours) and pleasure (prostitution) initiatives sustained by a combination of diaspora visitors and local elites' *ooper ki aamdani* (income on top of actual wages where the top is usually high-top) and local successful businessmen.

In terms of future, this consumer market economy of Azad Kashmir will keep fluctuating with the size of remittances and return migration. However, if the local sources and means of production are improvised and new business and entrepreneurship manage to survive and flourish or new sources of investment could be materialised then of course the story can be different to this envision.

Some small initiatives in dairy products and vegetable growing can be seen in some parts of Kotali. However, nothing of any significance is noticeable to utilize local natural resources or any innovative business ideas. One major impediment for utilizing local potential especially in food and tourism remains the poor transport and communication infrastructure. Roads are very poor and despite constant road building, the poor planning and an accepted culture of corruption in the entire administration, roads remain unrepaired, insecure and dangerous.

There is also some potential for development of media and film 'industry but again due to the indifference of local government and private sectors' it remains struggling with some very committed individuals in Mirpur and Pothohar carrying on despite losses. Scores of Pahari and Pothohari telefilms are produced recently mostly financed by British based Pakistanis and Azad Kashmiris that gained some popularity amongst a section of migrant and local viewers but due to lack of training and coaching the stories, acting, directing and technical production has a long way to go yet. Lakeer by Ali Adalat and Shiv Dutt and Zarchshma by Akhtar Immam Rizivi and Arshad Rachiyal remain exceptions as serious productions.

Other Areas of Azad Kashmir

It seems important here to highlight some points about the other regions of 'Azad' Kashmir including Muzaffarabad and Poonch. For many years I believed that migration to Britain was an exclusively Mirpuri phenomenon and there was no migration to UK from Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions at the time when Mirpuris were leaving in large numbers to meet the labour shortage in British textile mills and foundries. However, during the running of 'Aapna' and KBC TV channels in UK, I have come across some British Kashmiris from these two divisions of Azad

Kashmir who migrated in late 1950s and 1960s. I asked them why then there was no large-scale migration from these areas to UK?
The answers can be summed up in the following two points:

1. Either the other members of their families did not want to come because there were more opportunities in these two divisions for government employment due to capital of Azad Kashmir being in Muzaffarabad combined with the political leadership also being concentrated in these two divisions.
2. Having more links with Rawalpindi and preferring to go to Lahore and Karachi for work than to UK.
3. Those who migrated to Britain did not make any concerted efforts to invite other members of their family, villages and baradaries, as did the Mirpuris.

However, lately a large number of Kashmiris from Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions migrated to Middle East and later again to different European countries and recently to UK on business or student visas or for asylum especially in Europe by the members of different pro-independence or as they would like to be called 'nationalist' parties. In addition to UK, Europe and Middle East, there is also some migration from Azad Kashmiri to USA, Canada, South Africa, and Malayan countries.

The economic potential of Poonch and Muzaafarabad division is huge mainly in tourism and fruit growing areas. However, due to lack of control over local resources and lack of vision perhaps the Azad Kashmir state has so far been failed to materialize the potential.

Due to Azad Kashmir economy being controlled by Pakistan through its banking system, the big portion of Pakistan's foreign exchanged earned by the Azad Kashmiris settled in different countries of the world never gets invested in the development of Tourism, fruitation or on other potentials of Azad Kashmir.

Azad Kashmir is not only a market for Pakistani commodities and perhaps the largest source of foreign exchange and capital for Pakistani government and private sectors, it being covered with forests of precious trees and the passage of major rivers is a major source of timber, water and electricity for Pakistan. Indeed as illustrated below by Zulfiqar Abbassi, head of Jammu Kashmir joint Chamber of Commerce and President of CPDR, Azad Kashmir with the hydle potential of 18,000MW is emerging as saviour for Pakistan as for as the power sector is concerned by:

> *"…developing small hydel projects and mega-projects such as raising of Mangla Dam to 1,300 MW and Neelum-Jhelum to 969 MW in Public sector, Patrind 148 MW, Kohala 1,100 MW, Karot*

700 MW and Azad Pattan 640 MW in the private sector. These are already under process.

In addition to the ongoing projects, there are many other projects including Mahl 550 MW, Dudhnyal 550 MW, Chakothi 500 MW, Ashkot 250 MW, Sehra 350 MW, Kotli and Gulpur 250 MW and Rajdhani 126 MW, with a number of smaller projects at different stages of implementation that can be developed and inducted into the system shortly. Development of 8,000-MW hydel projects in Azad Kashmir can turn around Pakistan's power sector and revive Pakistan's industry and economy.[34]"

Azad Kashmir is rich in minerals, which it is claimed are either not explored or taken away privately by partnerships of some Azad Kashmiri and Pakistani men of influence[35].

Analysing the causes for the economy of azad Kashmir lagging behind, Abassi notes, "that the government's hands are tied under the constitutional arrangements between Azad Kashmir and Pakistan. A brief look at the AJK's Interim Constitution Act, 1974, reveals that all major areas of economic potential fall under the jurisdiction of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir

[34] http://cpdr.org.pk/2012/04/08/energy-from-azad-kashmir/

[35] Malik, K.A. (1970) A Study of Bauxite Deposits in Azad Kashmir, University of Karachi, Department of Geology, Thesis.

Council, which is headed by the prime minister of Pakistan. These include hydropower generation, banking and finance, stock exchanges, telecommunication, oil and gas, tourism, mines and mineral exploration, aviation and air travel, state property, leasing and insurance and levy of tax on all incomes. In these areas the Azad Kashmir government has no say in policymaking[36]."

Chaudhary Seed, a prominent businessperson of Mirpur who also headed the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce highlighted the unfair taxation system and high charges for electricity as other causes for the lack of economic development of Azad Kashmir. He also noted the potential of Azad Kashmir in growing international quality tea and flowers worth billions of rupees along with the great potential in developing international tourism[37].

Indeed the economy of Azad Kashmir is at a crossroad. One road goes to finding effective and productive ways of investing locally the huge capital deposits in local branches of Pakistani banks into different development projects utilizing

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[36] Abassi, Z. (2011), 'Why Azad Kashmir Lags, The News International, Daily available on http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-63238-Why-Azad-Kashmir-lags.

[37] Saeed, M. (2012), 'Azad Kashmir economy needs attention', The News Interbnational Daily, available on www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-3-115857-Azad-Kashmir-economy-needs-more-attention.

local resources and potential in private and public sector. Another road goes to Jammu. If roads between Mirpur and Jammu are opened for trade like the one between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, the choice for businesses in Mirpur division, including Kotali and Bhimber districts will be multiplied and although Mirpur will become a consumer market for Jammu products, they will more likely enhance the level and quality of competitiveness and entrepreneurship. The choice for traders as well as for the shoppers many of whom go from Britain will enhance which will contribute in improvement of the quality of competition and production.

However, if the Azad Kashmiri political and business leadership failed in keeping the current interest of, and interaction with, the Azad Kashmiri diaspora and in opening up of the trade between Jammu and Mirpur division, there is very strong likelihood that the flow of remittances will gradually diminish and Azad Kashmir in general and especially Mirpur division will gradually either loose its present status or be pushed back to the era of barter economy. This brings us nicely to have a look at the current political set up of Azad Kashmir.

POLITICS

The background context of Kashmiri politics is outlined below and in the next chapter. Here only the current situation with the election politics is briefly noted.

At present, the dominant trend in the 'mainstream' politics of Azad Kashmir is to grab the share in corruption that defines the governance in this supposedly free part of the divided Kashmir. Overall, the politics here can be divided in two broader ideological camps – the accession to Pakistan or accessionist politics and pro-independent Kashmir or independence politics. The major accessionist parties include Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference, Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir, Azad Kashmir Muslim League and Azad Kashmir Jamat e Islami. The proponents of independence include, Jammu Kashmir Liberation League, Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party, Jammu Kashmir Peoples National Party, United Kashmir Peoples National Party, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Conference, Jammu Kashmir National Party, and Jammu Kashmir Freedom Movement. Recently a Public Rights Party has also been formed which has focus on AJK only with a clear inclination for a distinct Kashmiri identity and welfare of the people. Most parties in both the pro-accession and pro-independence camps have their youth and student wings.

According to a recent survey sponsored by Saiful Islam Qadafi and carried out by Chatham House, a British think tank, 45% people in Azad Kashmir support the idea of an independent Kashmir[38].

However, the support for independence has not been translated into electoral power or vote bank because the interim constitution of Azad Kashmir imposed by the Bhutto's Pakistani Peoples Party in 1970s bars any political party from participating in election that does not expressively support and pledge loyalty to the ideology of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. Indeed any activity that promotes the idea of independent Kashmir is illegal in Azad Kashmir where it is obligatory to chant the slogan of 'Kashmir Baneyga Pakistan' (Kashmir Shall be Pakistan)in schools assemblies across AJK as a sort of religious ritual.

As indicated in the baradari section above that in AJK the election politics became closely linked with 'The Party' when party was merely three years old in 1934 elections. Since then the baradarie had been resisting the party within different electionsit political parties of AJK. The politics that openly denounced the baradri politics and, largely, mixing religion with politics had been the 'pro-independence' politics both nationalist and progressive traditions. However, here too a closer look reveals that khawaja and other 'Kashmiri'

[38] Bradneck, R.W. (2010), 'Kashmir: Paths to Peace', Kings College London and Assocuites, Asian Programme, Chetham House.

baradaries dominate most of the pro-independence parties. Nonetheless, the politics of pro-independence groups does not revolve around or determined by the baradaries.

The latest developments in AJK show that election politics and baradrism have converged into the 'Azad' Kashmiri chapters of main Pakistani political parties. The Muslim League (N) has become a predominately Raja Party and Peoples Party, mainly a Jatt Party. The Muslim Conference which used to be backed by the Pakistani military establishment remains the only local Azad Kashmiri party of any electoral significance in the race and is pre dominantly Sardar's or Sudhans party. The Jammu Kashmir Peoples Party of Khalid Ibrahim son of Sardar Ibrahim the founding Prime Minister of 4th October and President of 24th October 'Azad' Kashmir governments also represents Sardars but a relatively smaller party than MC. The Gujar baradarie in Azad Kashmir is perhaps the largest baradarie and have more seats in the current assembly than any other baradari but has not formed its own party yet.

In practice, the politics for the central leadership of these parties has become a very much business than a political activity. It is a common knowledge that from the point of getting nomination from one's party for contesting assembly seat to retaining the power in Azad Kashmir, the large

sums of money are to be paid to the Pakistani controlling mechanism, both civil and military at different levels. Information gathered about the June 2011 elections show that currently the prices for PPP are the highest at several million rupees. These are paid with the clear intention that once inside the assembly that amount will be recouped with profit, from bribes, recruitments and transfers in public sectors, development projects and other bribe revenues including land plats in and around cities and criminal justice cases etc. The Mirpur development authority is considered as the most attractive source of monetary gains for the politicians and bureaucrats across AJK.

The formation of Pakistani parties have although generated a great deal of excitement amongst some baradaries, the Muslim Conference which has campaigned around the theme of only 'Riyasati'; State party has accused the Pakistani parties of causing serious damage to the 'Kashmir Issue'.

The nationalists in Azad Kashmir who are constitutionally banned from participation in elections for many years did not launch any significant campaign against the situation for various reasons. Initially, they were well aware of their lack of the numerical support and infrastructure needed for election politics. They went for the politics of agitation, protest and guerrilla activism. However, gradually when the support for independence ideology risen despite or

perhaps because of suppressive tactics used by the Pakistani establishment and Azad Kashmiri accessionist parties, the voice of independence became stronger and now at least fifty per cent of Azad Kashmiris would vote for independent Kashmir. As per election politics the pro-independence camp is divided into those who are in favour of contesting elections despite the precondition of pledging loyalty to accession to Pakistan and those who view elections as fraud and irrelevant till the entire Kashmir is liberated or at least till the undemocratic restrictions on pro-independence Kashmiris are removed. One main feature of Pro-independence politics in Azad Kashmir as well as the diaspora is that it is not constructed around any one baradari. Indeed, they pose serious challenge to Pakistani occupation as well as baradarism, which along with religion is clearly used by the Pakistani occupation machinery in AJK to strengthen the occupation.

In 2011 some of the nationalist parties formed Jammu Kashmir National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and participated in elections for the first time by accepting the 'accession to Pakistan' condition with the objective of raising awareness amongst masses of 'national' issues and creating some space for independence politics through the election process.

It is clear however, that pro-independent Kashmir politics in Azad Kashmir is facing with the greatest

challenge to strengthen their alliance and fight elections as a part of their strategy to build national politics as an alternative to accession politics that remains embedded in baradarism. At present the pro-independence politics remains fragile and insignificant due to JKLF, the largest of pro-independence groups out of National Democratic Alliance but with the 'liberation' politics of JKLF being under several pressures, it seems likely that in near future JKLF will also join hands with some alliance like the NDA or at least participate in elections and turn the pro-independence politics into a real alternative or face further marginalization and risk extinction.

Like economy and socio-cultural networks, the political space of Azad Kashmir also has a transnational dimension through diaspora connections in many countries. The Azad Kashmir elections are not contested only in Azad Kashmir. The campaign for political support and fundraising is also carried out in Middle East, Europe and USA, especially in UK. Soon after their nominations were formalised for 2011 elections from Peoples Party, Barrister Sultan left for Britain and Matloob Inqalabi for Middle East to muster support. It is estimated that over 400 British Kashmiris flown from UK to campaign for their candidates in the constituency of LA-1 Dadyal. Similarly, hundreds more arrived and were given gala receptions at Mangla to campaign in LA-2

from Khaliq Abad to Palaak. It applies to Kotali and Khoiratta and several other constituencies.

As the prospects for an out of box settlement of 'Kashmir Question' are gradually unfolding at wider South Asian and global levels, it seems likely that any solution will recognize at least three governments in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and Frontier Illaqas. These include 'Jammu and Kashmir' (or the Indian occupied Kashmir government), 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (or Pakistani occupied Southern Kashmir) and 'Gilgit Baltistan' (Pakistani occupied Northern Kashmir) which are expected to get greater autonomy and recognition from India and Pakistan as well as more say in and compensation for their resources along with greater freedom in economic development and trade related issues. However, much depends on the skills, abilities and vision of politicians in each administrative setup in articulating the nature, scale and level of their needs and autonomy.

Now let us turn to the formation of this 'Azad' government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir and the historical and political context of its birth and evolution.

Aarzi Jamuria Hukumat; the Provisional Republic Government

A faction of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference announced the first government of

Azad Kashmir on 4th of October 1947 at the Paris Hotel in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. This new Muslim Conference one of the main political parties of undivided Kashmir was formed in 1942. The declaration was published in the Civil and Military Gazette of 8th October 1947.

The deceleration claimed that a provisional government was set up in Kashmir State with headquarters in Muzaffarabad in Kashmir territory 20 miles from Pakistan border. It further stated that after the lapse of parmountcy, the Maharaja had losted the claim over Kashmir. This government claiming to be the representative of Kashmiri people was headed by Mr Anwar, a prominent member of the Kashmir Muslim Conference, the president of which Chaudhri Mohammad (sic) Abbas and the General Secretary Agha Shaukat Ali, are imprisoned by the Kashmir government for over a year[39].

It is agreed by most commentators that the President of this government Mr Anwar actually was Khawaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar who was one of the founding members of the Reading Room Party that was setup in Srinagar in late 1920s and proved the catalyst for the popular politics in the Valley.

[39] Aseem, M.A.(2010) on http://www.international.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=787:provisional-republican-government-of-kashmir&catid=36:news&Itemid=74

The Prime Minister was Sardar Ibrahim Khan of Rawalkaot a barrister by qualification and a rising star in the New Muslim Conference. It must be noted that it was same Ibrahim Khan who hosted the controversial meeting at his residence in Srinagar on 19th July 1947 which some of the Muslim Conference activists claim passed the accession to Pakistan resolution. This resolution is officially celebrated by the Azad Kashmir Muslim Conference while the then acting General Secretary of Muslim Conference professor M Ishaq Qureshi rejects the claims of any such meeting of Muslim Conference party or any official resolution for accession to Pakistan.

Within two weeks of the Provisional Republic Government, the tribal from Pakistan entered Kashmir forcing Maharaja to turn to India for help who provided that in return for accession. This brought in the Indian army followed by regular Pakistani army initiating a long war between the neighbours over Kashmir.

Some writers claim that Patiala Troops entered Jammu region of the state on 8th October and by 18th about 8,000 were stationed in the Valley[40]. Whereas Gupta (2011) claims that Pakistani army, men were ambushing in and around Mirpur from September 1947. He also claims that the Pakistani

[40] Zargar, A.M. (2011) available on http://kashmirwatch.com/news/print.php/2011/10/26/count-down-to-indian-army-landing-in-kashmir.phtml

army and Pathans launched massive attack on Jammu and Kashmir state on 17th October 1947. Of course, all these claims need further academic exploring and verification.

On 24th October 1947,[41] the Provisional government was reorganised into the present day Azad Kashmir government with Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim as its President[42].

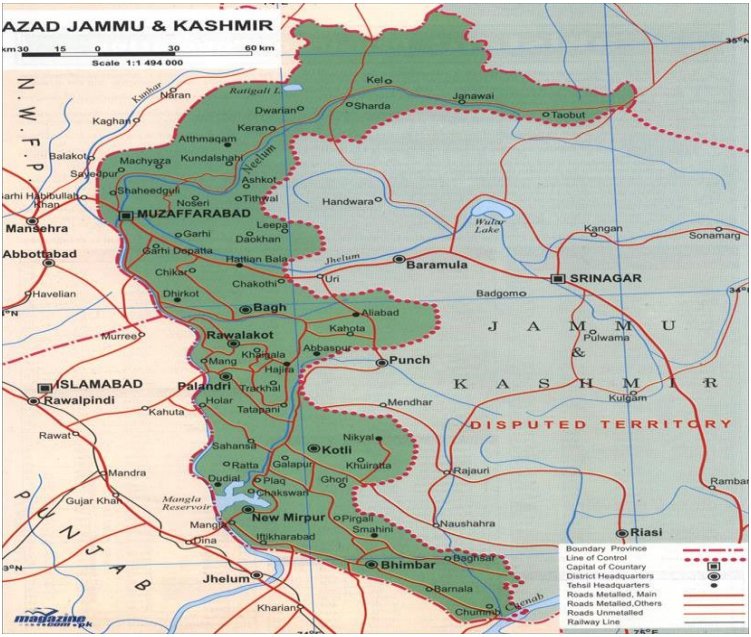
As late as the 'Independent Kashmir Resolution' on July 18th 1947 the majority of Muslim Conference led by Chaudhary Hamid Ullah and Professor Ishaq Qureshi stated at several occasions that that the party was in agreement with Maharaja about the constitutional democratic future of the State. The elections were held in January 1947 in the state and the state was clearly heading towards constitutional democracy. What then came to the major Kashmiri parties that compelled National Conference to leave the path of democratic reforms in 1946 and to launch 'Quit Kashmir' that reduced the Kashmiri Identity back to the valley of Kashmir and forced Muslim Conference to announce a provisional government led by the leaders who

[41] According to Mehmood Hashmi, the Azad Kashmiri official representative in Pakistan and later Chief Publicity Officer for AJK government the date of 24th is not the one when this government was actually formed but was chosen as the founding day of Azad Kashmir because it coincides with the United Nations Day.

[42] Two days after the announcememt of his government on 4th October, Khawaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar (Anwar) went back to the Srinagar apparently to convince Sheikh Abdullah for joining hands. However, some days after meeting Sheikh Abdullah he was arrested by the Maharja Government. See http://sudhan.wordpress.com/2010/02/21/ghulam-nabi-gilkar-and-kashmir-freedom-movement/

opposed the Independent Kashmir as late as 18th July 1947?

This needs doing some history rounds for a better understanding of the background context.



***Azad Kashmir.*[43]**

[43] Since this map is prepared from the Pakistani point of view it shows only the Indian occupied Kashmir as Disputed. In fact the entire Kashmir State is disputed between Kashmiris and the occupiers. For more details about the administrative and political structure of 'Azad Kashmir' please visit the AJK government's website: http://www.ajkassembly.gok.pk/ajkintroduction.htm

The Idea of Azad Kashmir

Jammu Kashmir was the only state of nearly 600 princely states where a popular politics had emerged in 1930s and at the time of British departure from subcontinent the popular politics in Kashmir was grown into a full political spectrum reflecting from communists on the far left to the communalists on the far right and rest of the modern political diversity in between. The major political parties included Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (JKMC) and Jammu and Kashmir Kissan Mazdur Conference (JKMC) in order of their popularity and influence.

On 12th May 1946 the leaders, workers and supporters of newly formed Kissan Mazdur Conference that can be described as the third force in the popular political space of Jammu Kashmir State were gathered in a spacious Pandal for the plenary session of the Party at Kaba Marg in Annant Naag or Islamabad. According to Prem Nath Bazaz, the senior leader of KMC it was in this convention that the slogan of Azad Kashmir was raised for the first time. Indeed one of the entry gates to the Pandal was named as Azad Kashmir Gate.[44]

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44 Bazaz, P.N. (1950), Azad Kashmir: a Democratic Socialist Conception, Very Nag Publishers Mirpur Azad Kashmir.

This session adopted the constitution and an outline of political programme for the KMC and assigned Prem Nath Bazaz to develop a comprehensive document elaborating the party programme and struggle. However, he could not do that due to the breaking out of the 'war of liberation' and his detention for three years during which he was denied access to writing material by the government of Indian held Kashmir. Meanwhile *"an independent Government came into existence over a part of the State and came to be known as Azad Kashmir Government.*[45]

It is not clear who initiated the idea here and named one of the Gates of the above convention as 'Azad Kashmir'. Obviously, the origins of this concept are in the answer to that question. It appears from the book 'Azad Kashmir: a democratic socialist conception', that the idea and achievement of 'Azad Kashmir' was surely discussed by the Mazdoor Kissan Conference and then the gate was named Azad Kashmir and Prem Nath Bazaz was asked to develop the idea further.

It seems that soon the 'New Muslim Conference', the other major political party also promoted the idea.

We learn about this from the writings of another political activist and writer of that era Mr Yousaf Saraf in his 'Kashmiris Fights for Freedom'. He

[45] Op. cit. P: 12

cites 'Azad Kashmir Resolution' approved by the Working Committee of Muslim Conference in its Srinagar meeting on 26th July 1946. This was then approved by the party workers' convention attended by over two hundred members on July 27. The resolution demanded that a constituent assembly should replace the 'existing outlived assembly' that will frame a constitution for Azad Kashmir as it deems fit'[46]. It further asked that the assembly to be 'elected on the basis of an extended franchise' and 'every Nation (sic) and community should enjoy representation on the basis of its population and through separate electorate[47].'

The third and the largest political party of Kashmir at this stage was National Conference for which there is no evidence of using the term Azad Kashmir but it is well established from its revolutionary programme ' *Naya Kashmir*; New Kashmir' that party was heading towards a constitutional democracy with Maharaja as figurehead.[48]

According to the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946, Kashmir like other princely states had three options, "to assert complete independence, to accede Pakistan, or to accede India".[49] It seems

[46] Saraf, Y. (1976), Kashmiris Fight for Freedom, Ferozsons, Lahore. Pp: 694-95.
[47] Ibid.
[48] New Kashmir, available on http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Naya_Kashmir#Naya_Kashmir
[49] Anand, A.S. (1991) 'The Development of the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir', Verynag Publishers, Mirpur, Azad Kashmir.

that at this stage the Maharaja government, National Conference (an ideological ally of the Indian National Congress) and Muslim Conference (an ideological ally of the Pakistan Muslim League) all were in favour of independence. The Mazdoor Kissan Conference was also for Azad Kashmir but without monarchy.

In terms of governance, it seems that the Public in Kashmir at this time was interested not so much in accession to India or Pakistan as in the establishment of a responsible government in the state.[50]

However, a closer look reveals a three ways politico-ideological split that was subsequently reflected in the geographical division of the "State of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha".

Maharaja continued maneuvering for independence. On 12th August 1947, he sent identical telegrams to India and Pakistan for standstill agreement.

However, it seems that the two major political parties were unable to defend their version of independence from the onslaught of Indian and Pakistani nationalisms and gradually swung to their ideological centres.

This also fractured the national Kashmiri politics on the regionalist fault lines. The first deviation from the understanding between Maharaja and major political parties was the Memorandum by

[50] Op.cit.p:83

Sheikh Abdullah to the Cabinet Mission on their return from Srinagar on 24th April 1946, which challenged the Amritsar Treaty and asked for not only the responsible government but also end the autocratic rule.

In this memorandum it also became clear that the diversity recognised in the New Kashmir a couple of years ago was perhaps not a coherent and thought through policy of the National conference or this new conception of Kashmir was reflecting more localised agenda rather than that of the state. While this point needs further exploration, it is obvious that it reduced the notion of Kashmir to the Koshur language and culture. In this memorandum, Sheikh Abdullah argued:

"Kashmir is not merely a geographical expression, in the north-west of the vast sub-continent of India, famed for its beauty and natural wealth, but it is a land strategically situated, the meeting point of India, China and Russia, and as such has an international significance. Our home-land is the cradle of the Kashmiri nation which by virtue of the *homogeneity of its language, culture* and tradition and its common history of suffering, is today one of the rare places in India where all Communities are backing up a united national demand".[51]

[51] Saraf, Y, op. cit.p:670. Emphasise is mine.

Here the Kashmiri nation, which sheikh Abdullah represents, is the one, which has one language (Koshur) and Kashiri culture and traditions. In this notion of Kashmir, there is no space for non-Kashiri speakers and regions beyond the Valley of Kashmir. This even does not recognise the diversity of Kashmir Valley where a significant number of Pahari and Gojari speaking communities are residing from millenniums. The Quit Kashmir Movement launched on 15th May 1946 was for Maharaja to leave Kashmir valley. It is also noticeable that sheikh Abdullah expressed authoritarian and monarchic type behaviour and according to Pandit Kayshup Bandhu, never consulted non-Muslim members of the NC Working Committee.[52]

The other major political party, the New Muslim Conference did not support the Quit Kashmir Movement. Its focus at this point appears on the political reforms to enhance the participation of Muslims in the state affairs and greater equality between the citizens in religious and armed forces recruitment laws etc. in the independent constitutional democratic state of Kashmir.

On May 28th 1946, Chaudhary Hameed Ullah the acting president of Muslim Conference outlined

[52] Saraf, Y op. cit. p: 672.

the position of his party in a press conference as follow:

"Accession to Pakistan would be unpleasant to Hindus while accession to India will disturb Muslims. Therefore, we have decided not to enter into any controversy with either India or Pakistan. The second thing we have decided in that we should try to acquire independence for the State. The third question now before us is what would be the position of the Maharaja? We have never been lacking in showing loyalty and respect for him and it is because of this attachment that we did not support the Quit Kashmir Movement, although in one way it was a natural movement. We, therefore, felt that we should try to find out a solution, which will maintain the position of the Maharaja Bahadur, while at the same time; it should also satisfy the praja (people). The best solution that we have found is that the Maharaja should become a constitutional King, as is the position in many other countries. The fourth thing that we have decided is that we should have a Constituent Assembly of our own to draft our constitution. The Muslim League has already boycotted the Constituent Assembly (British Assembly). Therefore its proposed constitution cannot satisfy Muslims because it must have been prepared by hundred per cent Hindus. If our four representatives sat in this Assembly, they would just be wasting their time.'

The statement further said*: 'I have the support of all important leaders of the Muslim Conference and Choudhry Ghulam Abbass Khan has himself expressed agreement with this proposal. A representative convention of the Muslim Conference will be called within a month, where the proposal will be unanimously adopted. This solution, therefore, should be considered as the official policy of the Muslim Conference. The Muslim League has not given us this solution, nor are we presenting it to deceive the Hindus. We have arrived at this solution in all honesty and after taking into account the local situation. The only connection that the Muslim league has with it is that its past and present policy of non-intervention in Indian States has strengthened us. I would like to say in all honesty that we have had no talks in this connection with any leader or worker of the Muslim League, and that Hindus should also give up being led by the Congress. The best thing for us all is that the League and the Congress should leave us undisturbed and that we should give up both the parties. When we say that we want to separate ourselves from Hindustan and Pakistan, we mean that we want to be friends with both of them, but we do not want to be influenced by either of them. We should have political as well as economic relations with both. We think that we will have good relations with Pakistan and, in the presence of the*

ruling Hindu dynasty we will also have good relations with India.[53]'

Nearly two months of this press conference Chaudhary Hamidullah and Professor Ishaq Qureshi were to call another meeting of the party to convey the messge of Quaid e Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah who they met on 11th July 1947. In this meeting, they briefed that Mr Jinnah, who was now Governor General of Pakistan advised the Muslim Conference leaders to support Maharaja of Kashmir's efforts for independent Kashmir. A resolution for supporting independence was passed in this special meeting of Muslim Conference on 18th July 1947.

However, it seems that the support was not unanimous and those who opposed the resolution called another meeting next day at Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim Khan's residence and passed a resolution for accession to Pakistan on 19th July 1947. While Professor Ishaq Qureshi, the acting general secretary of MC at the time repeatedly denied the existence of any such resolution the government of Azad Kashmir officially celebrates this resolution as 'Accession to Pakistan Day'.

The above press conference by Chaudhary Hamid Ullah also shows that at this point the interference of Muslim League and National Congress from British India on communal lines was clearly a

[53] Op.cit. Pp:707-708

cause of concern amongst the politicians in the state. Such concerns were also evident in the proclamation issued by Maharaja of Kashmir on 15th July 1946 that no foreign intervention in the affairs of the state will be tolerated[54].

On 12th of August Maharaja Hari Singh sent telegrams to the dominions of India and Pakistan for a standstill agreement for the continuation of transport, trade and communication links with the new dominions[55]. Pakistan accepted the offer and India asked for more time.

By the deadline of 14th August set by the departing British for the states to decide their future all states signed accession with India or Pakistan except Junagarh, Hyderabad and Kashmir. In terms of religious composition, Junagarh and Hyderabad were Hindu majority states ruled by Muslim Nawabs and Kashmir was a Muslim majority state ruled by a Hindu Maharja. Had the principle of partition based on religious composition applied to the princely states, both of these states would have acceded to India and Kashmir to Pakistan. However, since that principle was applicable to the British India only and not to the states, the Nawab of Junagarh Mahabat Khanji opted for accession to Pakistan whereas the Nizam

[54] Saraf, Y. op. cit.
[55] Hewitt, V. (1997), ' Kashmir: the unanswered question', History Today, Vol 47, No. 9.

of Hyderabad Osman Ali Khan and Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh for independence.

The case of Junagarh needs to be discussed in some details here as it bares some relevance with the formation of Azad Kashmir government. The Pakistan government accepted the accession application by Junagarh on 15th September that was actually made a month ago on 15th August 1947.

Just ten days after, some Junagarris formed a provisional government on 25th September headed by Samaldas Gandhi. This was followed by the economic blockade of Junagarh from India.

When Pakistan failed to respond to requests for help and the Nawab of Junagarh Muhabat Khanji fled to Pakistan on 25th October, the Dewan of Junagarh Sir Shah Nawaz Butto handed over control to the government of India and left the state on 8th November 1947.

As mentioned above the governments of Pakistan and Kashmir had signed the standstill agreement on 12th August 1947, which meant that arrangements for such services as trade, communication etc. were to continue as they did with British India. Internally, as elaborated below, the popular politics was grown into several political parties representing the full spectrum of modern politics from far left communists to far right communalists with liberal nationalists, socialists and progressives in between.

What the writers on Kashmir of this period usually overlook is that the growth of this modern popular politics, although not completely isolated from the wider sub continental space, reflected the conditions of the distinct geographic container (nation-state) of Kashmir.

Until this stage, it seemed that affairs between Kashmir and Pakistan government were going fairly well and JK Muslim Conference was cooperating with Maharaja who clearly wanted to retain independence. Indeed by this time attempts for launching two other political parties were also made from the government side, 'All Jammu and Kashmir State People's Conference' by the Prime Minister Pandit Ram Chandra Kaka and 'All Jammu and Kashmir Voters Conference 'by Mian Ahmed Yar. However, none could take off.

Some sort of tension and resentment prevailed in Poonch region of Kashmir where it is sometimes claimed that Maharaja Hari Singh introduced new and high taxes after taking control of the region from Raja of Poonch during the Second World War[56]. However, it must be noted that Poonch that was a tributary of Kashmir since the treaty of Amritsar was taken over by the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1935.

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[56] Aseem, M.A. (2010) 'Provisional Republic Government of Kashmir', www.international.to available on http://www.international.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=787:provisional-republican-government-of-kashmir&catid=36:news&Itemid=74

On 14th August Pakistan and on 15th August India came into being as nation-states. Inside Kashmir apart from that controversial resolution of Muslim Conference on 19th July 1947 at the residence of Sardar Ibrahim Khan there was no practical efforts from any of the major political parties for accession to either India or Pakistan.

The leaders of India and Pakistan initiated several moves to coerce or influence Maharaja Hari Sing to sign accession with their country. However, Maharaja resisted the pressure and did not accede to either.

It seems that at this stage Maharaja's approach towards popular politics was that of coercion and suppression as the most popular politicians of Kashmir including Sheikh Abdullah and Ghulam Abbass were in prison in relation to Quit Kashmir movement since 1946.

The political leadership of different Kashmiri political parties on the other hand was more in touch with the political leaders of the Indian National Conference and Pakistan Muslim League than the Maharaja of Kashmir.

The first dramatic challenge to Maharaja came from Poonch where it is argued by the Pakistani perspective that the resentment against higher and multiple taxes introduced by the Maharaja existed since taking over this region from his nephew in 1935.

Recently Sneddon in his 'The untold story of Azad Kashmir' presents a detailed narrative of the events and argues that it was this rebellion that challenged Maharaja Rule and not the Pakistani government[57]. However, some local Kashmiri writers, including Ishaq Qureshi the acting general secretary of Muslim Conference in 1940s in an interview with this author claimed that indeed, it was the Pakistan government's officials including the chief ministers of Punjab Mr Mamdot and NWFP Mr Khan Qayum were active in Kashmir long before they sent the Pakistani tribal that caused the rebellion.

It is also claimed by some writers that after losing Junagadh, Pakistan contacted Mirza Bashir and authorised him to do something about Kashmir. Mirza then called over Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and some others to explore various options[58]. After several meetings, they decided to form a Provisional Government with Ghulam Nabi Gilkar as President and Sardar Ibrahim Khan as Prime Minister.

Another version is that the rebellion was local and motivation was accession to Pakistan amongst the large sections of Poonch and Mirpur regions.

[57] Sneddon, C. (2012), 'Untold Story of the people of Azad Kashmir', Hurst, C & Co, UK.

[58] Zeir Uddin (2011) available on http://sudhan.wordpress.com/2010/02/21/ghulam-nabi-gilkar-and-kashmir-freedom-movement/

Here a quick overview of the wider historical context in which Muslim Conference was born seems appropriate to understand the rationale and nature of this Azad Kashmir movement and government. This historical context is also important for understanding the present set up of the Azad Kashmir government and the politics of azad Kashmir in general.

More History

The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (JKMC), first-ever political party of Kashmir in modern sense was born out of a popular political uprising in October 1932.

The initial thinking for setting up a political organisation emerged soon after the Galancy Commission report presented to Maharaja Hari Singh in April 1932[59]. During Sheikh Abdullah's visit to Lahore in July 1932, it was decided along with Mirza Bashir Uddin Mehmood that within two months an All Jammu and Kashmir Conference to be held in Srinagar that should be representative of all regions and classes and the conference will then be formally organised into a political party.

[59] The commission cionsisted of Mr BJ Glancy (Presodent) Political Department of India, Mr Ghulam Ahmed Ishahi, Muslim Representative Kahsmir Province, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Hindu Representative Kashmir Province, Chaudhary Ghulam Abass Muslim Representative Jammu Province, Mr Loke Nath Sharma Hindu Representative Jammu Province. For details see Hussain, S, (1985) 'Kashmiri Musalmanon Ki Siyasi jado jehd (political stuggle of Kashmiri Muslims) 1931-1939 selected documents, National Institute, Islamabad.

On his return to Srinagar Sheikh Abdullah consulted other likeminded people and started the work for organising the conference. In this process, political workers from Srinagar, Muzafarabad, Shopiyan, Islamabad, Gilgit, Mirpur and Poonch etc. worked together. Soon Choudhary Ghulam Abbass who was also active in organising a Muslim political party met Sheikh Abdullah in the late January 1932 in Srinagar Central Prison and agreed to form a party by the name of Muslim Conference after their release. In Jammu, such activists as Sardar Guhar Rehman were of the view that a separate conference should be formed for Jammu. However, on his invitation Sheikh Abdullah visited Jammu and had discussions with Sardar Guhar Rehman, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbass, Mistri Yaqoob and Sheikh Ghulam Qadar etc. All agreed to work for All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and postpone the idea of a provincial conference.

The first convention of the party was held on 15th October to 19th October 1932 in Srinagar. Over 300,000 people participated in its unprecedented public session. Sheikh Abdullah was elected the founding President and Chaudhary Ghulam Abbass as the founding Secretary General of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. Sheikh Abdul Majed Advocate was elected Vice President along with four other secretaries including Moulvi Abdul Rahim Vakeel, Mian

Ahmed Yaar, Mr Abdul Hakeem and Mr Ghulam Ahmed[60].

This era and the popular upsurge that dominated the political space of Jammu Kashmir sometimes referred to as the "political awakening" and the source of a national Kashmiri political consciousness[61]. There is a tendency of explaining the political awakening in Kashmir as the work of British colonial intelligence and conspiracies to take control of Gilgit agency or to teach lesson to Maharaja Hari Singh for speaking out in the London roundtable conference for the complete independence of British India[62]. This approach however does not appear convincing when placed in the wider context that shaped political consciousness and in which the socio-political organisations were formed and evolved.

As outlined below the point that needs to be noted about the eruption of popular politics in 1930 is that it was not an overnight phenomenon but the culmination of various historical struggles, events and processes. Therefore, it is possible, like always, that British or the other interest groups

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[60] See Hussain, S, (1985) 'Kashmiri Musalmanon Ki Siyasi jado jehd (political stuggle of Kashmiri Muslims) 1931-1939 selected documents, National Institute, Islamabad.Pp:19-20

[61] For details see Bamzai, 1967; Bazaz, P.N. 1941; 1954, Kahsmir publishing Delhi.

[62] Seghal, N (2001), Converted Kashmir, Utpal Publications Delhi. Also available on http://www.kashmir-information.com/ConvertedKashmir/Chapter17.html
See also Madhok. B.R. ' Kahsmir: the storm centre of the world', available on http://www.kashmir-information.com/storm/chapter4.html

including the Indian Muslim League, Congress and communists probably had done whatever they could to use the uprising for their own interests. However, claims that the uprising was instigated by British or anyone else seriously undermine the contribution of Kashmiri workers, peasants, employees and general masses to stand against the hard and harsh socio-economic and political conditions at the time. A very brief overview of the rebellions and struggles before the popular uprising is offered below.

Firstly, there were Silk Workers' efforts to improve the poor pay and working conditions initiated in 1847[63] followed by more protests and strikes in 1866 and 1927[64]. These struggles must have encouraged some sections of the population to speak up for their rights. However, this was not the only pocket or strata of the Kashmiri society/ social space where the oppression was challenged.

The conditions of peasants who formed an overwhelming majority in the state also caused widespread resentment and forced some middle class political activists to raise voices in the corridors of power. It is unfortunate that the impacts of communal view of politics and society originating from the British India infected the

[63] Just one year after the takeover of the Kashmir Valley by Maharaja Gulab Singh who was handed over in his independent possession the Kashmir Valley and adjacent territories by the British Colonial power on 16th March 1846 for the sum of 7.5 million rupees or £300,000.00 pounds.

[64] Saraf, Y. (1977), Kashmiris Fight for Freedom, Ferozsona, Lahore.

history of the popular movement in the Kashmir state. However, to an extent it can also be due to the lack of information that the recent historians on popular uprising in Kashmir of Maharajas fail to acknowledge and record the struggle of one leading Kashmiri activist who arguably was the actual founder of the political movement that erupted in 1930s. His activities also shed light on the plight of peasants and their efforts to improve their conditions.

He was Sardar Budh Singh of Mirpur. I became aware of this legendary activist after migrating to Britain through a book by Dr Ghulam Hussain Azar on Raja Mohammed Akbar[65]. Not many people of my generation know that actually he was the earliest prominent political personality of Kashmir state that responded to the calls of modern radical and popular politics in British India aiming at that time to challenge the British colonialism. As outlined by Bulraj Puri in a recent article in Rising Kashmir, Sardar Budh Singh was the first to organize a public meeting against forced labour or Begaar at Hazuri Bagh, Srinagar in 1915 while serving the state as deputy Commissioner or Wazir e Wizarat. He resigned from his job in 1925 and became more active to improve the lives of peasants along with such

[65] Azar, G.H. ( ) ' Batale Hurroiyat; Raja Mohammed Akbar.
I am grateful to Abdul Ahsan Asim of Sheffeild/ Kotali who lent me this and many other books on Kashmir from his personal library .

other Kashmiri progressive activists in Mirpur as Raja Mohammed Akbar and Master Roshan Lal etc.[66]

The 'Land Commissioner' in a report on Sardar Budh Singh wrote that he favours the farmers to the extent that does not even care about the rules and regulations. In 1931 after his *'Kissan ki Dastan*; the story/narrative of the peasant', was banned he wrote a pamphlet titled *Dard E Dill;* Pain of the Heart. In this pamphlet, he wrote:

Personally, I am loyal to the policy of Justice, Sympathy, Mercy and Equality. Loyalty expressed with anything contrary to these is merely conniving and deceit. I cannot be loyal to any government that does not operate on the basis of Justice, Human Sympathy and Equality and that does not address the miseries of poor and wounded subjects/populace"[67].

His resignation in 1925 against the injustice and exploitation of peasants across the state can arguably be described as the first major sign of Kashmiri middle class awakening to the changing realities of their time. He wrote his observations in Kissan ki Dastan (The narrative of the peasant) and *'Gharib ke Dukh ka Elaaj'*; Remedy for the

[66] http://kashmirforumorg.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/recalling-first-jammu-dogra-president.html

[67] Singh, B. (1931), Dard E Dil; Pain of the Heart',p:14 cited in Azhar, G.H. (1984) ' biography of the son of liberation: Raja Mohammed Akbar Khan, Lahore, P; 81.

Misery of Poor). He also wrote *Faryad E Reyiyat*; the plea of the populace', 'Dihati Zindagi; The Rural Life' and 'Mulazmat ki Zindagi; The Life of Government Employment and 'Insaaf Ki Talash; In Search of Justice'[68].

Unfortunately, none of his writings is publically available, certainly not on this 'Azad' side of the divided Kashmir[69]. However, as quoted in Ghulam Hussain Azar's book on one of Sardar Budh Sing's closest comrade Raja Akbar, he used to describe the high share of government in agricultural production in the public gatherings of peasants on these lines:

> *'O peasants the grain is a produce of your hard labour but come the birds of government officials and eat it away. The time has come to stand up against this injustice and tell the government that we won't let this carry on'.*[70]

According to Balraj Puri, the legendary leader formed the Kassan Party in 1934. When Muslim Conference was changed to National Conference,

[68] Azhar, GH. Op. cit. p:83.

[69] It seems that Ghulam Hussain Azhar certainly had these books in his library but what happened to his library after his death few years back is not known.

[70] Azar, G.H, Batal E Hurriyat; the son of liberation

Budh Singh joined it and was elected president twice. The function in which "Niya Kashmir' (New Kashmir) one of the most significant documents of political reforms in Kashmir was launched in August 1944 was also chaired by Sardar (by now Mahatma) Budh Sing[71]. The peasants' movement was erupted in full flow in 1031/32 in Mirpur against the high taxation and suppressive methods of collection.

In a different form and at a different level, middle classes of the Valley Kashmiris initiated a campaign against the British Indian domination in the state employment sector, which led to the establishment of the Kashmiri citizenship law – the State Subject Legislation. This movement was initiated in the first decade of 20th century by the state employees predominately Kashmiri pundits, who have been historically led the 'white collar' – or 'public sector' employment in Kashmir. They demanded greater representation in the state employment in comparison to the employees brought in from British India. After several definitions and redefinitions of the "State Subject", it was finally made into law on 20th April 1927 that the "*mulkis*" of the country or locals will be given preference in employment. A *mulki* was defined as one who lived in the state for three generations. This legislation provides the legal basis of modern

[71] Din, U.Z. (2010), http://www.risingkashmir.in/news/history-of-chalo-ii-1000.aspx

Kashmiri national identity and citizenship and is applied until this day in all parts of the divided state except Gilgit Baltistan where Pakistan abolished it soon after taking control of these areas in November 1947. However, it can be noted that demands for the restoration of State Subject in GB are growing significantly.[72]

By 1930s, there was also a growing unrest amongst the peasant across the State against new land taxes and harsh methods of revenue collection combined with the corrupt state officials. The major peasant uprising was surfaced in the present day "Azad Kashmir" areas mainly in Mirpur district where peasants launched a 'No Land Revenue Movement' (NLRM) or 'Maliya Band Tahreek' (MBT) against new taxes imposed on land and agricultural production. Usually the histories of popular politics in Kashmir mention this movement in passing only. However, Yousaf Saraf gives some accounts of the circumstances and participants of this movement.

"The land revenue had been increased; Nautor outstandings had been inflated and the categorisation of land had been also done unjustly, resulting in arbitrary enhancement of land revenue. It was under these circumstances that a no-tax campaign was launched by Gauhar Rehman in consultation with and the approval of the

[72] Col (rtd) Wajahat Hassan, the senior leader of All Parties National Alliance (APNA).Enquired over the facebook.

local leadership, among whom was a fiery young man, Illahi Bakhsh, whose forefathers had migrated from Kashmir valley during the great famine. The Movement soon caught the imagination of the masses and in a matter of few days realisation of taxes came to a stand- still. It also spread to the tehsil of Mendhar in Poonch Jagir and parts of Rajouri. On 5th Poh, 1988 (20th December, 1931), the Government promulgated Notification No. L-24 to provide enhanced punishment for the non-payment of Government dues. It made participants in the Movement and even those who could be suspected of any support, express or implied, liable to imprisonment extending up to six months or fine without any limitation or both. With the promulgation of the Notification, a stream of Muslims were sent to jail, summarily tried and sentenced. Among others, who were arrested and later became dedicated workers of the freedom (sic) Movement were Illahi Bakhsh, Mohammad Akbar Khan, Maulvi Mohammad Abdullah of Siakh and Haji Wahab Din in Mirpur tehsil, Raja Zaman All in Samahni, tehsil Bhimber and Sardar Fateh Mohammad of Kerala, Mendhar[73].”

73 Taken from http://www.kashmiri.info/Kashmir-Fight-for-Freedom-by-Yousaf-Saraf/the-killings-continue.html

A glimpse of the peasant life in Kashmir before the eruption of popular politics

As discussed above Sardar Budh Singh was one of the pioneers and a visionary of this peasant uprising in Mirpur but Saraf obviously failed to record his involvement. Krishn Dev Sethi who was born around 1930s and as a teenage boy became an active member of the group of political leaders that led the 1932 movement, offers a longer list of participants. He states:

> When the popular rebellion was broken up in 1932 against the autocratic rule the leading names included Raja Mohammed Akbar, Moulana Mohammed Abdullah Siakhvi, Haji Wahab Uldin, Sardar Budh

Singh, Ghazi Abdur Rehman, Peer Subah Sadiq Ali Shah, Raja Walayat Khan, Ghazi Mohammed Bakhish, Fazal Mohammed, Ghazi Elahee Bakish, Hafiz Mohammed of Samwal, Moulvi Abdul Karim of Kott Kandhoo, Moulvi Abdul Karim of Paniyam, Moulana Mohammed Yousaf, Moulvi Abdul Hakeem, Subedar Raja Bashir Khan Berrhing, Nambradar Allah Ditta Khan Malott, Raja Mohammed Zaman Khan Almaroof Raja Buddhey (Old/great) Khan Samahani, Raja Lal Khan commonly known as Saeein (saint) Lal Badshah (Red King) of Charohi, Raja Karam Dad Khan known commonly as Keema Khan of Panjehra etc. In the area under Poonch administration, the family of Sardar Fateh Mohamed Khan Karelvi actively participated in the movement. Also active were Moulana Ghulam Haider Jandalvi, Moulana Abdullah Fazal Garh, Moulana Mohammed Nazir and Moulana Mohammed Yousaf. In Mangg area, the activists included Munshi Feroz Ali and Sardar Kamal Khan, Ghulam Qadar Bandhey etc. In Poonch, there were Moulana Mohammed Saeed Masoodi, Moulvi Ghulam Mustafa, Master Abdul Aziz etc. and in district Muzafarabad Chaudhary Aziz Uddin, Chaudhary Naimat Ullah and

Abdul Aziz Ellahee Rajorvi were the main activists.

Krishan Dev Sethi further mentions that Raja Walayat Khan, known as Bata Khan of Ghazi Gurrah and Peer (Saint) Subah Sadiq Ali Shah of Nograan Kharri were hanged and Saint Lal BadhShah, Ghazi Mohammed Bakash of Sagwal and Malik Fazal Ahmed were given long sentences. Martial Law was imposed, Burma Act was introduced and English Army inflicted cruelties in the command of Salisbury[74]. Very little is known about this chapter of Kashmiri history beyond the veteran activists.

It must be acknowledged here that while Salisbury led the way to suppress Land Revenue Movement in Mirpur, the report he prepared to dig out the causes of the uprising remains the only social study of Mirpur to this day. The report acknowledges the stark disparity between Muslim and non-Muslims in government employment, especially in Revenue Department and offer valuable information on the contribution of different baradraies in terms of revenue. Highlighting the reason for people not giving in to the Maharaja forces the reports states that the leaders of the movement including Raja Akbar, Sardar Budh singh, Moulvi Wahab and Moulvi Abdulla Siakhvi along with thousdand of people

[74] Qureshi, W. (2005), 'Tareek Mirpur ka eik ahim Daur; An important chapter in the history of Mirpur, Adabistan, Lahore. P:192

took oath on Quran that they will never pay the revenue until the new unjustified increase is taken back. Therefore, the report recommended that only way to deal wth the unrest is to take the increase in the revenue back and address the issue of disparity between the communities.

During this period, Moulvi Abdullah Siakhvi captured the social and political state of Mirpur in his poem *'Lehter Nama'* that became very popular amongst local people and some would perhaps still remember it. I could get hold of only these few stanzas.

ہن کھول اکھیں زمیندارہ
تیرا لُٹیا گیا ہی گھر سارا
بندوبست زمانہ آیا جس تینوں مار مُکایا
مکھن انڈے دُدھ کھلایا نالے مالیہ کر کے بھارا
ہن کھول اکھیں زمیندارہ
تیرا لُٹیا گیا ہی گھر سارا
جو منجھی پیڑھی لکڑی او جا پٹواڑیاں پکڑی
نالے تینوں کیتا پکھڑی لیا پہھوہ گرداور سارا
ہن کھول اکھیں زمیندارہ
تیرا لُٹیا گیا ہی گھر سارا

Open your eyes Oh Farmer
Your whole world is being looted
The age of land clasificationt has come
This has put you to death
You have fed them with eggs, butter and milk
And they have increased the revenue
Whatever little furniture you had

The land registrars have confiscated that
They have rendered you bankrupt
And all of your crops are also taken away

In conclusion the political awakening in 1930s across the Kashmir state was not an overnight incident conspired by some outside forces. It was culmination of several processes that were rooted in the socio-economic and political conditions of the state.

Born out of this mass political movement was the first political party of Kashmiri history, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in October 1932. Its first president Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah (1910 -1984) was a postgraduate from Aligarh University in Chemistry. He was (under) employed as science teacher in a secondary school. Abdullah and his family were to dominate the politics of Kashmir till this day.

Another aspect of the popular politics at this stage needs some clarification is the criticism particularly from 'Hindu, and later Indian perspective, on Muslim Conference, as being a communal party.

Apparently, only the name of this party seems enough to substantiate this criticism. However, a closer look at the Kashmir of that particular era may help to understand that this 'communal' tendency was not an exception to Muslim politics

but a norm for the socio-political organisations of the time. Prior to Muslim Conference, there were several small and large organisations and groups functioning across the state. It appears from these groups that naming organisations after particular community was a common practice. For example, there was *Yuvak Sabha*, which was formed in 1930s and was mainly concerned with the welfare of Pundit community. There was *Dogra Sadhaar Sabha* (Dogar Welfare Organisation) formed in 1905 with focus on the welfare of Dogras. Then there was *Arya Samaj* from 1880s and *Snatan Dharam Sabha* in 1905 etc.

Several Muslim welfare organisations were also in existence including *Nusrat Ul Islam*; Victory of Islam and Anjman e *Taleem o tarbiyat*; organisation for education and development, and so on. Just before the formation of Muslim Conference, there existed an 'All Kashmir Muslims Uplift Association' (AKMUA). Historians and scholars who start their analysis of popular politics with accusing Muslims as being communal for naming the first political party as Muslim Conference need to examine the society and reform trends of the time more closely. As can be seen from the names of the above initiatives it was a dominant trend to form religious organisations aiming at socio-political reforms within the particular religious community but at the same

time to advocate for unity between different religious communities.

Even such emancipated and sawadeshis as Sardar Budh Singh joined Akali movement and campaigned for the welfare and development of Kashmiri Sikh community[75]. Therefore, in any analysis of communal approach to politics Muslims must not be singled out, not then and not now.

In terms of religious composition, Kashmir was a Muslim majority state with Muslim making over 65% of the total population of the state. However, it seems that an equally important reason for the first political party of the Kashmiri history taking religious or some would claim communal identity had a great deal to do with class and power structure of the state. The Muslims were disproportionally represented amongst the peasants and workers who formed majority and "grassroots base" of the expressions of popular Kashmiri politics at that juncture. They were the 'Have Not's of Kashmir. The masses in general had religion as the main ideological channel available through which they could express their political grievances. Hence, the party was called Muslim Conference but it is acknowledged by many Kashmiri writers including Prem Nath Bazaz and Prithivi Nath Koal Bamzai that the mass

[75] . (Kaur,R. 1996)

movement that took over the Kashmiri society in 1930s was not a communal but national in character. As for the Muslim Conference was concerned Bamzai writes in History of Kashmir:

> *"… [t]hough communal in name, the policy of the conference from its very inception remained national in essence". (P: 661)*

Pundit Prem Nath Bazaz also highlighted this aspect of the 1931 popular upsurge in his speech on 27th April 1939 in the special session of Muslim Conference called for formalising the change in name of Muslim Conference to National Conference.

"The 1931 revolution was not a communal disturbance; it should be called a national revolt because it broke the chains of slavery though afterwards some people gave it communal direction to fulfil their selfish interests[76]."

From the formation in 1932 to its transformation into the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) in 1939, the Muslim Conference won a range of political, economic, religious and employment rights for the Kashmiris of which the main but not exclusive beneficiaries

[76] Saraf, Y. Op. Cit. P: 535.

were Muslims being the most deprived and disadvantaged group in the society.

It is not in the scope of this article to discuss in detail the ideological debates within and outside of the Muslim Conference about the freedom struggle in Kashmiri society. Suffice to say that several MC leaders and senior activists viewed the name Muslim Conference as a hindrance for building a national politics or a 'national political space' inclusive of, and open to, the entire population of the state.

A sort of progressive national politics was also sought by few non-Muslim activists such as Prem Nath Bazaz, Sardar Budh Singh, Master Roshan Lal, Turlok Chand and others. Among Muslims, Sheikh Abdullah was representing the national secular and progressive tendencies from the very beginning of his political career. In his first speech as the founding president of Muslim Conference in October 1932, Abdullah clarified that the movement was not a sectarian but for the peoples of all 'nations'[77]. He also linked better relations between the communities with the socio-economic progress of the country. He said:

"I want to assure my fellow countrymen, be they Hindus or Sikhs that we are equally prepared to address their sorrows as those of Muslims. Our country can progress only if we learn to live in

[77] The notion of nation it seems was used at this juncture of Kashmiri history for religions.

harmony with each other. The victory can be achieved only when we mutually respect our rights and help each other in overcoming our problems. Hence our movement is not a sectarian movement.[78]*"*

The opposite position was represented by Mir Waize Yousaf who argued for Muslim to remain united as a religious community to gain greater influence in the politics and governance of Kashmir. In reaction to the tendency of MC leadership for opening up the party to non-Muslims, Mir Waize left the party and formed his own Azad (Free) Muslim Conference (AMC).[79]

The debate between religious and plural politics after taking many twists and turns for about six years was eventually concluded in 1938 when the pluralist argument won in the working committee and the resolution to change the name of the party from Muslim to National Conference was then tabled before the General Council. All but three out of 173 members of the General Council voted for the change. It is common amongst historians who view Kashmir through two-nation theory to claim that the name change was a ploy by Sheikh Abdullah and such activists as Prem Nath Bazaz to weaken the Muslims of the state.

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[78] Hussain, S.M. (1985), Political Struggle of Kashmiri Muslims (1931-1939), Selected Documents, National Research Institute, Islamabad.

[79] Saraf, Y. op. cit. p: 492.

However, as briefly overviewed below the name change was not an abrupt or overnight incident but went through several informal and formal deliberations and democratic proceedings within the Party for over six years. While the seeds of inclusive approach to politics of such leaders as Sheikh Abdullah could be traced in his first speech referred to above in the first session of the party where he described the party as non-sectarian, the debate carried on for several years before getting formalised in the 6th annual session of the Muslim Conference on 25th to 27th Match 1938. Here the resolution for amendment in the name was presented and approved in the Working Committee meeting of Muslim Conference on 28th June 1938.

As per constitution, the meeting recommended the forthcoming General Council to amend the party name. The General Council met and confirmed the WC recommendations on 27th April 1939. Then there was a *"special session of the JKMC held on 10th and 11th June 1939 that approved the Working Committee resolution No.5 of 28th June, 1938 for the change of the name of the Conference and from bringing about the necessary amendments and changes in its constitution, which was confirmed by the General Council in its session held on the 27th of April, 1939".*[80]

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[80] Saraf, Y. op. cit. P: 528

It can be seen through these proceedings that initially some of the senior leaders of Muslim Conference including Allah Rakha Sagar, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and Chaudhary Hamid Ullah etc. opposed the movement. However, gradually they were convinced by Sheikh Abdullah that we have to overcome the tendency of viewing our political issues through religious lenses in the state. Except Ch. Hamid Ullah, the rest voted for the change. Of total 200 members of the General Council 176 attended, the special session and all but three voted in favour of the changing Muslim Conference to National Conference.[81]

Sheikh Abdullah and Choudhary Ghulam Abbas remained president and secretary general of the party respectively. The change while, theoretically opened doors for an inclusive politics in terms of creed and colour it widened the gap between those Muslims favouring the idea of national politics and those who were for an exclusively Muslim politics. While the nationalists were branded by the proponents of Muslim politics as "anti-Islam", the nationalists in return accused the politics of their opponents as "communal". At popular level in the Valley it was expressed through such slogans as '*sher*; lion' for Sheikh Abdullah and National Conferencees and '*bakra*; goat' for Mirwaiz Yousaf and Muslim Conferencees. The attempts by

[81] Hussain, M.S. op. cit. P: 52

National Conference failed to attract significant numbers of non-Muslims in its ranks. Why? While no specific, research is available on the subject in my view the reasons can be traced in the communalism of the non-Muslims especially Pundits and Dogaras whose elites also found it hard to contemplate the fact that Muslims were being emancipated from their economic subjugation.

The polarization that was sharpened further following the divide in the anti-colonial movement against British rule in neighbouring India also had long-term impacts on Kashmiri politics. Here those disheartened by the change of the name of Muslim Conference although represented a small minority in the party carried on with the idea of Muslim Conference and re-formed it in 1942 under the auspices of Zafar Ali Khan of the Indian (later Pakistan) Muslim League[82] with Choudhary Ghulam Abbas as its secretary. While the National Conference demonstrated ideological closeness to the Indian National Congress, the Muslim conference became closer to the Indian Muslim League. The rift later grew on to the "regional and provincial" lines with National Conference dominating the Kashmir Valley province and Muslim Conference the Jammu Muslims. These

[82] Professor Ishaq Qureshi, the acting seceretray of this Muslim Conference in 1946 told this author that he was instrumental in the reformation of MC under the instructions, and in the presence, of Zafar Ali Khan.

cracks in the Kashmiri popular politics later contributed in making the invasion, division and occupation of Kashmir a relatively easy venture for the newly independent "nation- states" of India and Pakistan.

It was in this context that a faction of the New Muslim Conference declared the provisional government in Paris Hotel Rawalpindi on 4th October 1947.

Azad Kashmir Government: the declaration

Officially, the Kashmir day is celebrated in Azad Kashmir on 24th of October when the present government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir was arguably established. However, there is more to this story. Several independent sources including the declaration of the present AJK government itself prove beyond any doubt that another government existed before the 24th October government. The opening paragraph of the 24th October declaration reads:

"The Provisional Azad Government which the people of Kashmir had set up- a few weeks ago, with the object of ending intolerable Dogra tyrannies and securing to the people of the state, including Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, the right of the free self-government has now established its rule over a major portion of the state territory and hopes to

liberate the remaining pockets of Dogra rule very soon."[83]

The provisional Azad government referred to in the above declaration was declared on 4th October 1947 with an alias name Mr Anwar (actually Ghulam Nabi Gilkar) as president and Barrister Sardar Ibrahim Khan as Prime Minister. In his Presidential address, Mr Gilkar stated:

"With the end of the British rule, the Maharaja Hari Singh's claim to rule the state (by virtue of the Sale Deed of Amritsar) has also come to an end."[84]

The declaration stated for the government to be an inclusive of all state people regardless of religion, region or other distinctions and desired for friendly relations with the neighbouring states of India and Pakistan.

Mr Ghulam Nabi Gilkar was a Kashmiri from the Valley who was instrumental in setting up the Reading Room Party along with Sheikh Abdullah and others, which introduced new political awakening in the Valley and was later linked with similar political activism in other parts of the state, especially Jammu that initiated the mass movement of 1930s. Barrister Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim Khan of Poonch was made Prime Minister while Nazir Hussain Shah Finance Minister, Mr

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[83] Taken from Aseem, M. A. http://kashooo.wordpress.com/2011/10/01/4th-october-1947-is-the-birthday-of-the-provisional-republican-government-of-jammu-kashmir/

[84] Din, U. Z. (2009) Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and Kashmir Freedom Movement, available on https://sudhan.wordpress.com/2010/02/21/ghulam-nabi-gilkar-and-kashmir-freedom-movement/

Faheem as agricultural Minister, Mr Aleem (meaning Knowledge) Education Minister and Mr Karkhana (meaning factory) as the Minister for industry. It is widely believed that the names of the latter two ministers like that of the president were also not their real names.

This government was reorganized on 24th October 1947just two days after the tribal invasion from Pakistani side[85]. The new government clearly acknowledged the 4th October government and adopted its declaration to be a non-communal government having friendly relations with India and Pakistan. The prime minister of the 4th October government Sardar M Ibrahim was made head of the 24th October government. He was woken up at midnight by two Pakistani 'kingmakers', Mr Khawaja Abdul Rahim and Ms Nasim Shah Nawaz to be appointed as president of the reconstituted government of Kashmir.[86]

I had been amongst Kashmiri who claimed that the 4th October government was an independent some would say a revolutionary Kashmiri initiative and demanded this government to be restored.

[85] Mehmood Hashmi, the most prominent Azad Kashmiri name in Urdu literature and author of the classic of Urdu repertoire tradition 'Kashmir Udas Hai' (Kashmir is sad) who was made publicity secretary for Azad Kashmir government after his escape from Indian occupied Kashmir, told this author that the date 24th October was not on which the Azad Kashmir government was actually formed. This date was chosen long after October as the fictitious' birthday' of Azad Kashmir government by some senior Pakistani bureaucrats to coincide it with the United Nations Day.

[86] The Role of Azad Kashmir Government Edited by Dr Shabir Choudhary.

However, recently the re reading of this period of Kashmiri history has illuminated some aspects of this government that are usually overlooked but need critical analysis. For example on 25th September 1947, just over a week before the declaration of the 'Azad Kashmir' government, a provisional government was formed for Junagarh, a Hindu majority princely state ruled by a Muslim *Nawab* who announced accession to Pakistan on 15th August[87] but for some reasons the government of Pakistan made that public only on 15th of September 1947.[88] Led by Samaldas Gandhi "[t]he Provisional Government of Junagadh moved to Saurashtra and took possession of the Junagadh House at Rajkot. Young men from all over Saurashtra flocked to its banner of freedom. Large sums of money flowed in, volunteers were armed and trained. On the Dussehra Day, the "Day of Victory" - October 24, 1947 - the volunteers of the Provisional Government began their operations. People rose up against the Nawab's rule in several parts of Junagadh[89]."
What that had to do with the Azad Kashmir government? Well look at this account:

[87] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junagadh#Accession_to_India
[88] Norani, A.G. (2001), Of Jinnah and Jonagadh, Volume 18 - Issue 21, Oct. 13 – 26 available on http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl1821/18210760.htm
[89] Op.cit.

"[W]hen the Government of India ousted the Nawab of Junagarh; the Government of Pakistan approached Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Ahmad of Qadiyan and authorized him to take appropriate measures with regard to Kashmir. Mirza called Gilkar to Lahore. Several rallies were held at Rattan Bagh, Lahore. Besides Gilkar, the rallies were attended by Mufti Zia-ud-Din Poonchi, Chaudhury Rahim Dad advocate, Master Mir Alam Kotli, Ammanullah Khan of Khor Pattan, Professor Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi, and Syed Muhammad Abdullah Qadri. Suggestions put forth by the concerned persons were discussed threadbare and a plan of action was chalked out. It was during these meetings that the issue of forming an ad hoc Azad Kashmir government was discussed. Mufti Zia-ud-Din Poonchi was told to announce the government but he refused. Syed Muhammad Abdullah Qadri also refused. Finally, Gilkar came forward and declared the government.[90]

Another aspect of this government that deserves attention is the appointment of Sardar Ibrahim as the Prime Minister. It is officially publicised and celebrated by the New Muslim Conference that the party approved a resolution for the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan on 19th July 1947 at the residence of the same Sardar Ibrahim Khan.

[90] Din, U.Z. (2009) op.cit.

However, according to Professor Ishaq Qureshi, the then acting General Secretary of MC, the formal party meeting was held on 18th July 1947. Describing the background of this meeting Professor Qureshi told me in a very long interview that with the detention of senior leadership including Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and Allah Rakha Saghar in 1946 Choudhary Hamidullah and he (Ishaq Qureshi) were appointed as acting President and General Secretary of Muslim Conference respectively. Subsequently, both of them went to seek advice from Quaid e Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah and met him on 11th July 1947. This according to Mr Qureshi was the first official meeting of Quaid e Azam in his capacity of Governor General of Pakistan. In that meeting, Mr Jinnah advised the Kashmiri Muslim leaders to support Maharaja's stance for independent Kashmir.

The founding father of Pakistan also dictated a press release for Faiz Ahmed Faiz of the Daily Pakistan Times reiterating the Muslim League's policy of recognizing the princely states' right to independence. On their return from British India, Professor Qureshi and Chaudhary Hamidullah called the meeting of central committee where they presented the report of their visit and informed members of the advice given by the Governor General of Pakistan. While the majority of those present agreed and approved the resolution for

independent Kashmir some members including Sardar Ibrahim Khan opposed it.

When I asked professor about the next day meeting at Sardar Ibrahim's residence in Srinagar and the resolution of accession to Pakistan, he said that is all propaganda. At Sardar Ibrahim's house there was no meeting held. Some members met in an informal capacity and agreed to work for accession to Pakistan. Even then, it is widely believed in Azad Kashmir through official propagation that a resolution for accession to Pakistan was passed in a meeting of Muslim Conference at the residence of Saradr Ibrahim Khan on 19 July 1947. The Muslim Conference has been promoting this resolution as the official policy of azad Kashmir government. The aspect of this government I am trying to highlight here is that just two months ago Sardar Ibrahim opposed the independent Kashmir resolution on 18 July 1947 but was now appointed as Prime Minister of the Provisional Government for 'independent' Kashmir on 4 October 1947.

I could not find any reference anywhere if Mr Ghulam Nabi Gilkar was present in those meetings of Muslim Conference on 18th and 19th July 1947 and which resolution he supported. However, if we accept the account provided by Din (2009) that when the ruler of Junagarh was ousted from his state the government of Pakistan approached Mirza Bashir and *authorized him to take*

appropriate measures with regard to Kashmir who then called GN Gilkar over to Lahore where the idea of a provisional azad Kashmir government was discussed clearly shows the Pakistani hand in the 4th October government. However, authenticity of this reference needs further proof for which I repeatedly asked Mr Zair Ud Din if he can provide me the original source or reference regarding this claim but not received a response yet. Therefore, this needs further exploring.

Was Mr Jinnah aware of all this or was there a parallel policy on Kashmir existed without the knowledge of Mr Jinnah? The later events indicate that there was never a coherent policy of Pakistan government from the day one of their interference in Kashmir affairs. However, it is not in the scope of this article to indulge in a detailed analysis of that. According to Mr Ishaq Qureshi Quaid e Azam was not aware of the formation of the 4th October government, Tribal invasion or re organization of the Azad Kashmir government. In the same interview he told that two Pakistani officials brought Chaudhary Hameedullah and him to Pakistan in late September sometime. The full account of that interview will be published soon. Included here only what Professor Qureshi told about the role of Pakistani officials in their invasion of Kashmir in 1947. When they reached to Lahore the president Hameedullah was allowed in the high-level meeting, which included Chief

Minister of Punjab Nawab Mamdot, of NWFP Khan Qayum and several others, including senior military officials.

According to professor, Qureshi, Ch. Hameed Ullah Khan and he did not like this split of New Muslim Conference acting president and secretary by allowing one in and keeping the other out of the meeting and that was the second shock of our interaction with Pakistan[91]. Professor Qureshi told me that Choudhary Hameed briefed him of the meeting informing him of the invasion plan and told that I told them of the advice Quiad e Azam gave us on 11th July but they said forget about that and do as we tell you because they said they want to give Kashmir to Quaid e Azam as a surprise.

After few months Professor Ishaq and Ch. Hameed Ulla met Quaid e Azam in Karachi where according to professor Qureshi Mr Jinnah asked them annoyingly that, why we caused all the mess in Kashmir despite his advice not to indulge in violence? Professor Qureshi said we did not do this. It was your Prime Minister and other top officials who staged the invasion.

Mr Qureshi told me that when I said this, Quaid e Azam who was sitting on sofa upwards and

[91] First was on the way to Pakistan when we were released from Kohala police post to leave the state and asked the staff where the two other men who were arrested with us are? The staff replied they said they did not know you and only gave you lift so we let them off

leaning forward, almost fell back on the sofa, closed his eyes and did not speak a word for few minutes. Then he opened his eyes, sat up and asked us, can you write all this down and get to me within 48 hours?

We produced that report and then events took over and we saw Quaid after another few months when he was in Ziyarat in Queta but he was too week to say anything. He only smiled.

Soon we were summoned to the house of Prime Minister Khan Liaqat Ali Khan. He was laying on the king-size *dewan* leaning against the round pillow, Raina Liaqat Ali Khan was waving the hand fan, and they looked like a king and queen. Liaqat Ali Khan told us somewhat assertively; do not put any burden on Mr Jinnah anymore with all these issues. Whatever information you have convey that to me. The old man is too fragile for all this.

The Prime Minister had our report on his bed side table underlined in red[92].

What was the need of this independent government when the independent government of Maharaja Hari Singh was in existence and was supported and recognized by Mr Jinnah and Pakistan government through the standstill agreement signed between Kashmir and Pakistan government on12th August 1947? Especially, when that government of Maharaja was actively

[92] Professor Ishaq Qureshi's biographical interview Ali Adalat and I took about ten years ago is currently in the process of publication.

introducing political reforms for a constitutional democracy?

A closer look at the events of 1940s including such documents as the 'New Kashmir' (1944) of National Conference, 17th May 1947 statement and 28th May 1947 Press Conference of Chaudhary Hamid Ulla Khan, and the 18th July Resolution of Muslim Conference clearly point towards an understanding between the major parties and Maharaja of Kashmir on a multiparty constitutional democracy with Maharaja as a figurehead.

In this context, there was no need for any independent government unless it had been more representative than the existing government which means that it had massive involvement of people from Ladakh, Valley, Jammu and Gilgit Baltistan. Or it was for a revolution aiming to overthrow the feudal rule in the state. As is clear this government was merely to topple Maharaja and presented no revolutionary program whatsoever. If any revolutionary steps were taken in Kashmir they were taken by the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah who introduced land reforms which abolished the feudal system in Kashmir state before any such initiatives were taken by India's socialist Prime Minister PJN Nehru.

It is also an established fact that it represented only a fection of the Muslim Conference and not the party as a whole.

Indeed as mentioned above, if we accept the claims by such writers as Zahir Ud Din, it appears that this Kashmiri provisional government was formed under the instructions of Pakistan government to oust Maharaja and capture Kashmir as India did with the Junagarh. A closer look at the details of Junagarh case supports the claim made here that the Azad Kashmir government of 4th October that was reorganized on 24th October in fact was set up by Pakistan in reaction to the provisional government of Junagarh declared on 25th of September 1947. Indeed, it appears that this was the first of the series of covert efforts by that section of Pakistani establishment, which viewed Kashmir and the wider situation through communal and feudal lenses and for whom Kashmir is pawn in their game with the Indian communalists.

It seems absurd that this government set up by few dozen people most of whom were not willing to use their real names denounced Maharaja Hari Singh as unrepresentative. While they were claiming to be representatives of the entire population of Kashmir, a little probing would reveal that they were representing only that faction of Muslim Conference which two months ago opposed independence and approved the accession of Kashmir to Pakistani position. The reorganisation of this government soon after the invasion of Pakistani forces in Kashmir clearly

indicates that the 4th October Kashmiri government was not as independent and revolutionary initiative as some of us have been led to believe for many years. The head of this reorganised government on 24th of October 1947 was none other than Sardar Ibrahim who was appointed according Professor Qureshi by the Commissioner of Rawalpindi Mr Rahim. The same Sardar Ibrahim was head of AJK government on 28th April 1949 when control of Gilgit Baltistan was transferred to Pakistan and he was shown as one of the signatories to the infamous Karachi Pact. While informally he remained in denial of signing any such documents, he was in power then and for several years after that but never formally challenged the Karachi Pact.

However, that is not to deny the contribution made by Sardar Ibrahim and G N Gilkar and other leaders in the political progress of people around them and in the ideology of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. It also needs to be noted that despite a mysterious and fragile at birth, the Azad Kashmir government not only survived but also made some significant progress over the decades. In the beginning, the Azad Kashmir government was consisted of its President and Cabinet with very little resources and administrative infrastructure. Indeed if we compare the Azad Kashmir government of Sardar Ibrahim with the Jammu Kashmir government of Sheikh Abdullah that was

formed in the Indian occupied Kashmir, it appears that their political evolution took place on opposite directions in terms of their symbolic identity at least. The Jammu Kashmir government that replaced Maharaja Hari Sing's rule following the invasion of Pakistani tribes on 22nd October and the Indian troops on 27th October inherited continuity and a reasonably equipped and resourced material and non-material infrastructure including Sadr e Riyasat (president) Prime Minister and cabinet with proper offices and relatively better resources for carrying out governmental responsibilities. The Azad Kashmir government on the other hand was nothing more than a name and its President and cabinet had no structural, organizational and administrative resources or support available to them. The government was fully dependent on Pakistan.

However, in the years that followed the AK government became a relatively better-organised, structured and resourced body of governance although still lagging far behind the provinces of Pakistan in almost every field except the education ratio that is higher in AJK than Pakistan. While the ministries of defence and Azad Kashmir Regular Force (AKRF) were lost to Pakistan, this government did make some gains in its parliamentary structure, status and protocol. For this people like Sardar Ibrahim, Sardar Abdul Qayum and Chaudhary Noor Hussain who are

loathed by the younger generation of nationalists played significant role in preserving and promoting the distinct identity of Azad Kashmir. Though still a powerless legislative assembly subdued to the colonial like structure 'Kashmir Council, the government of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' has managed to gain some growth and stability in its structure and recognition over the past 63 years.

This government carries almost all symbols of an independent country including the president, Prime Minister, Supreme Court, National Flag and National Anthem. In this respect, it is an independent government. The only ingredient missing is the power of independence. The power lies with the Pakistan government which controls Azad Kashmir through Kashmir Council, Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, Chief Secretary of the Azad Kashmir civil bureaucracy, Inspector General Police (IGP), Auditor General and Kashmir Council – all institutions are headed by the Pakistani politicians, bureaucrats and head of the Pakistani state respectively. That is not all. The political and administrative structure that is controlled by the layers of Pakistani civil control is then monitored and controlled by a thick network of intelligence agencies spread across this 4,500 sq. miles strip of Kashmir state vertically and horizontally. That is why the Kashmiris who are aware of this control mechanism insist that this is not 'Azad' but 'Ghulam' (slave/occupied) Kashmir.

In this respect, it is no different from the IOK. However, the level of violence and scale and degrees of human rights violation by the Indian forces in IOK after the current uprising in 1989 has no comparison with that of Pakistani army in POK. In POK, the Pakistani army at present is not engaged in killing, arresting, or torturing Kashmiris en mass. However, the cases of Ali Murtaza and Arif Shahid in 2013 who its alleged were murdered by the Pakistani army and agencies respectively not been even investigated. In the case of Ali Murtaza who was allegedly picked by the Pakistani army from near the 'ceasefire line' while visiting his relatives it is claimed by several journalists that a large sum of money is paid to Ali's relatives for not pursuing the case. There are several cases of sexual and economic exploitation of inhabitants around the army barracks and bullying of some nationalists. Since there is no Human Rights group in AJK to record such events, therefore no statistics are available.

The pro-independence Kashmiris argue that if Azad Kashmiris ever challenge the Pakistani occupation like the Valley Kashmiris did to the Indian occupation, Pakistani military and civil machinery will demonstrate the similar behaviour if not worse. They cite the examples of 1953 Poonch Rebellion and the case of Bangladesh. The point of this argument is that India and Pakistan

both are occupiers in Kashmir and both use violence and torture even kill when their occupation is challenged.

There is also no comparison in terms of resources available to the two governments. The current annual budget of Indian occupied Kashmir government is over 300 million[93] whereas of Azad Kashmir it is 47 and for Gilgit Baltistan stands at just over 15 million rupees[94]. A detailed comparative study of the socio-economic, admitsrative and constitutional realities in the Indian and Pakistani administered parts of Kashmir.

[93] http://jkmonitor.org/index.php/using-joomla/extensions/components/content-component/article-categories/379-assembly-2012-rather-presents-budget-2012-13

[94] http://vusolutions.com/tag/download-azad-jammu-kashmir-budget-2012-2013-highlights-pdf-doc/

Sloganising the liberation of Indian occupied Kashmir is fine but can they defend the interests of Azad Kashmiris?

Azad Kashmiri Leaders

‘Azad’ Kashmir and the Politics of Independence

When the mass protests broke out in the streets of Srinagar in late 1980s and early 1990s, Kashmiris in Pakistani occupied Southern Kashmir (POSK) or ‘Azad’ Kashmir and those in diaspora especially in UK also came out in large numbers to support the uprising. As Saghir Ahmed, a British Kashmiri from Bradford recalls, we hoped that the moment of freedom for Kashmir has finally arrived’.

However, soon it became evident that while the causes of mass outbursts in the streets of Srinagar in 1987 were rooted in the suppressive political measures taken by the Indian governing party National Congress in partnership with the Kashmiri governing party National Conference, the gun and training was provided by a faction of Pakistani army and intelligence services who were motivated mainly by the religious perspective on Kashmir that ‘the state belongs to Pakistan’.

After more than two decades it appears that while the militancy of the movement in IOK that was

equipped by Pakistan has partly been crushed by Indian occupying forces and partly given up by JKLF in favour of non-violence agitation, there appear some serious challenges for the politics of resistance in IOK against the Indian rule and in POK against the Pakistani rule. Indeed, a potential conflict can contribute in making the division permanent like the rift between Muslim Conference and National Conference brought about the division or at least fecilitated the invasion of Indian and Pakistani forces that divided Kashmir.

The current resistance forces in IOK against the Indian occupation clearly allied itself with the Anti-Indian forces in Pakistan and POSK. There also appear some serious misunderstandings and differences with the pro-independent Kashmir movement here in this 'other Kashmir'. At times, some IOK activists show discontent towards the resistance movement in 'Azad' Kashmir against the Pakistani occupation. The resistance movement leadership in IOK rarely speaks out against the suppressive and exploitative nature of Pakistani rule in POSK and Pakistani Occupied Northern Kashmir (PONK) or Gilgit Baltistan. Instead, many in Hurriyat condemn Azad Kashmiri activists as 'Indian agents' for speaking against Pakistani rule in Azad Kashmir and in return a growing number in the pro-independent Kashmir movement in Azad Kashmir label the IOK anti-Indian occupation

leadership as 'Pakistani agents'. This reminds one the 'sher' and 'bakra' divide between National and Muslim Conference in 1930s.

This chapter on the birth and evolution of independence politics in 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' (AJK) is written especially for the younger generation of Kashmiris particularly those in IOK and in diaspora to get some idea of what the pro-independence Kashmiris in Azad Kashmir and in diaspora are about. For in my view the independence struggle for a unified Kashmir can go forward only through the younger generation and they can take the struggle forward only with some realistic sense of the history which currently is confined to small circles of senior activists and some members of their families.

It begins with a summary of the perspectives for independent Kashmir before the division of the state in 1947. This is followed by a quick overview of the independence politics in Azad Kashmir and its growth into a transnational movement through the diaspora Kashmiris across the world especially in Britain.

Independence perspectives before the division of Kashmir

It can be noted from the discussion offered in the previous chapter on the popular politics in pre-division Kashmir that prior to the division under the Indian and Pakistani armies in October 1947,

the political space of the Kashmir state while characterized by the full spectrum of modern popular politics was not penetrated by the 'accession' ideology, as yet. From far left communists to far right Hindu and Muslim religious based parties campaigned for a Kashmir of their likings with varying degrees of support. Until 1940s, there was no question of accession to any country and the popular political space was contested by the forces claiming to be striving for constitutional democracy, social revolution and religious politics with or without Maharaja or monarchy.

In the years before invasion, the National Conference was the largest popular party followed by the Muslim conference and Mazdoor Kissan Conference. However, it must be noted that even before the rise of popular politics Maharajas introduced the State Subject legislation that defined the citizenship of Kashmir state when no other state in the region had such 'national' legislation.

Only a few years after the emergence of Popular politics, the then Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh agreed to reform the system of governance by introducing partially elected assembly and greater role of emerging politicians in the state affairs. Later he also agreed with the leadership of Muslim and National Conference, the two leading Kashmiri

political parties to work for a British style multiparty constitutional democracy with Maharaja as figurehead of the state. This was endorsed in the 'New Kashmir' manifesto of National Conference[95].

However, as we now know there were different views and approaches within the Kashmiri as well as the Indian political parties about the future of Kashmir. For example, the Indian National Congress leaders Nehru, Patel and Menon approached Kashmir differently and so did Mohammed Ali Jinnah and most other leaders of the Muslim League. As late as 11th July 1947 QeA M.A. Jinnah advised the acting leaders of Muslim Conference including General Secretary Mr Ishaq Qureshi and President Choudhary Hameed Ullah to support Maharaja Hari Singh's position of independent Kashmir.

As narrated by M Ishaq Qureshi, it was on the advice of Mr Jinnah that he and Choudhary Hamidullah, the acting President of the party called the party meeting and passed a resolution

[95] From the events that followed it seems that the leadership of both Muslim and National Conference deviated from the independence path and arguably betrayed Maharaja on that. For he carried on to the route to independence but the politicians drifted away from independence to association with the Indian National Congress and the Pakistan Muslim League.

for independent Kashmir on 18th July 1947. This resolution was buried deep under the rubbles of Kashmiri history. The history that has been propagated and distorted by the occupying forces in the Pakistani occupied areas promoted the accession to Pakistan resolution that according to them was adopted on the next day 19th July 1947 by some of those senior Muslim conference leaders who were not happy with earlier Independence resolution and passed accession to Pakistan resolution at Sardar Ibrahim's residence.

In 1946, the Mazdoor Kissan Conference, which was for independent Kashmir also changed its position for accession to Pakistan in light of the material changes in the situation meaning the invasion of Indian and Pakistani political forces.

In this context, it can be claimed that the years prior to these later days of confusion and accession, the following four perspectives of independent Kashmir can be traced and identified.

1. The Official National Perspective;
2. The Popular National Perspective;
3. The Progressive National Perspective
4. The Religious National Perspective

Like all social phenomena, these perspectives on the ground or in reality were not clearly distinct, sharply separated and materially

polarised but they ceryialy had some identifiable distinguishing features, which are very briefly presented below for the interest of social science students who can perhaps explore and elaborate on them further.

The Official National Perspective or National Perspective 'from above'

Firstly, there was the official government perspective led by the Maharaja or (Monarch) Hari Singh. In this context Maharaj Hari Singh can be claimed as the first pro independent Kashmir leader of the modern state.

This perspective can be called Official Perspective that was rooted mainly in the interests of government elites comprising primarily of Maharaja's family, his Dogra Clan and the wider Raja baradari that also included Muslims mainly of Jammu along with land officials and Pundits of the Valley. Initially its goal was the continuity of Maharaja Rule however with the power of popular politics grown out of Maharaja Government's control he agreed to play the symbolic head of state governed by a popularly elected government by the state subjects, the citizens of the state. This perspective also spoke for, and incorporated, most of the Hindu voices and concerns of the state but more likely the Hindus and some Muslims of the higher socio-economic status and classes.

Regionally the epicentre of this perspective was the Jammu City but during the 101 years of Maharaja Rule, the notion of Independent Kashmir under Maharaja was supported by most of the government departments and officers across the state including the followers of all religions of the state but of course with special and superior status for the Hindus and more specifically Dogra Hindus.

The most prominent feature of this perspective and contribution to the state and nation building process was the State Subject legislation that defined the citizenship of the Kashmir state. The National identity shaped by this perspective was the Riyasati or State identity with Kashmiri as the most prominent and at times defining component of the political identity of the state.

The National Popular Perspective or National Perspective 'from below'

The National Perspective was emerged out of and shaped by the popular movement that surfaced for the land and employment rights with focus, initially, on the Muslim population but gradually encompassing all citizens of the state to be headed by Maharaja but governed by a popularly elected National Government. In this respect, this perspective can be seen as the merger of two forms of politics:

1. The hereditary politics of Maharaja System 'from above';
2. The popular politics of peasants, workers and middle classes 'from below'.

The epicentre of this perspective can be traced down to the Muslims of Srinagar and Jammu but it spread across the state into various regional, religious, linguistic and class formations or social groups and identities through the popular politics that gripped the entire state in the two decades before the division of the state under Indian and Pakistani occupation in 1948. The defining feature of this perspective was the New Kashmir manifesto that incorporating the State Subject provided grounds for the modern politics and governance in Kashmir State. The National Identity here was clearly the Kashmiri identity but not as a linguistic or cultural identity confined to the Kasheer Valley but a political national identity rooted in the State Subject encompassing all regions, religions and languages of the State. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter with the launch of 'Quit Kashmir' movement Sheikh Abdullah's notion of Kashmir did seem shrunk back to the Valley when he defined Kashmir by 'one language and one culture' (Kashiri).

The Progressive National Perspective

The Socialist perspective can be seen and described as the offshoot of National Perspective and was emerged out of the disappointment with the National Conference in delivering its promises and manifesto and or ,from this perspective, the authoritarian and undemocratic style of the leader of National Perspective Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. The epicentre of this perspective was in the left intellectual circles of Srinagar led by Prem Nath Bazaz and radical peasants of Valley's rural areas led by Abdusalam Yatoo. The most prominent achievement of this perspective had been the notion of 'Azad Kashmir' that was coined during its convention on 12th May 1946 in Kaba Marg Village of Annant Naag. It is explained in 'Azad Kashmir: a Socialist Democratic Conception' by Prem Nath Bazaz published in 1951.

The Religious Perspective

Fourth perspective that can be traced during those active and chaotic years of popular politics is the Islamist perspective led by Mirwaiz Moulvi Muhammad Yosaf. Again, this perspective was a reaction to the rise of National Perspective led by Srinagar's secular middle classes that posed challenge to the historical domination of Mirwaiz institution amongst the Muslim masses. Initially this perspective had the upper hand within the Muslim Uprising but with the argument of secular

and national politics gaining ground and eventually achieving clean sweep and converting Muslim Conference to National Conference, the Islamist perspective became marginalized and reduced to Mirwaiz institution represented in the political space by Azad Muslim Conference led by Mirwaiz Yusuf. However, it gained significance when the Jammu Muslims feeling subdued in Jammu re-formed the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference under the instructions of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan of All Indian Muslim League in 1942. Now its epicentre shifted to Jammu Muslims. The defining achievement of this perspective for the distinct identity of the state and nation building process can be seen as the resolution for independent Kashmir on 18th July 1947 and the government of 'Azad Kashmir'.

What happened to each of these perspectives following the invasion in 1947? This question is discussed below in some details.

After the division of Kashmir under the Indian and Pakistani occupation, two Kashmiri perspectives were severely damaged and dismantled owning to the disintegration of their organisational structures.

The Official National perspective for an independent Kashmir led by Maharaja Hari Singh was crushed by several internal and external

forces in the name of Democracy, Socialism, Secularism and Islam.

The Progressive National perspective of JKMKC led by Perm Nath Bazaz and Abduslam Yatoo according to Bzaz also was fragmented and dispersed.

Now only two perspectives were to lead the popular form of politics in two distinct regions of Kashmir separated by the invading armies of neighbouring India and Pakistan.

On the Indian occupied side of Kashmir, the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference swept the power completely in the Valley and emerged as a major political force in Jammu and Ladakh. The part of the state, which went under the Indian occupatio became known officially as 'Jammu and Kashmir' or J&K. On the Pakistani occupied side, All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference became the only political party to execute political power in what became known as 'Azad Kashmir'.

Let's first briefly look into what happened to the independence perspectives of the Muslim and National Conference after the division of Kashmir before tracing and identifying the emergence of new independence perspectives in what was now divided into 'Jammu and Kashmir' and 'Azad Kashmir'.

Indian Occupied Kashmir

In the Jammu and Kashmir (actually Indian occupied Kashmir or IOK), the National Conference replaced Maharaja Hari Sing's government as the ruling party with its very popular leader Sheikh M Abdullah as Prime Minister and Dr Kiran Singh, the son of deposed Hari Singh as Sadar e Riyasat, President of the State. The NC, which championed the cause of common person in the New Kashmir manifesto, changed its political stance from striving for an independent sovereign nation-state of Kashmir to ruling an autonomous state of Indian Union with special status until the referendum was to be held. Autonomy meant that such affairs as defence, communication, foreign affairs and currency were to be managed by the Indian Union and Kashmir will be independent in other matters with own President, Prime Minister and flag etc. Indeed this was a standstill arrangement which Maharaj Hari Singh offered both India and Pakistan on 12th August 1947, before the invasion which Pakistan accepted but India asked for more time to look into it.

However, this arrangement could not be sustained for long and scepticism between Sheikh Abdullah the Prime Minister of Kashmir and Juwahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India gradually grew with some reports that Sheikh was working towards an independent Kashmir. According to

B.N. Mullick, Jawaharlal Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India was informed that Sheikh was in Gulmarg hatching a conspiracy for a rebellion in Kashmir.

As narrated in an article in the Daily Greater Kashmir on 15th August 2011 by Parvez Majeed, on 8th August 1953 at 4.20am, Sheikh Abdullah was woken up by his secretary R.C. Raina to tell him that his government was dismissed and their hut was surrounded by the Indian Army. The reasons for this sudden dismissal were later announced by the new Prime Minister G.M. Bakhashi on 9th August on Kashmir Radio in the following words:

"Some former associates of ours (read Sheikh Abdullah) were indicating, through their activities and speeches that they wanted to form a free state…it would have been disastrous if they were allowed to go ahead with their designs…"

"The Hut No. 57-A, in Gulmarg, from which Sheikh was arrested, is testimony to the trust-deficit and fragility of relations between New Delhi and Srinagar[96]."

In reaction to this Sheikh Abdullah and several senior leaders of NC, including Afzal Beig formed

[96] *http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Aug/15/the-moment-of-history-5.asp*

the Mahaz Raye Shumari (Plebiscite Front) and demanded referendum to decide the future of Kashmir. For two decades the relationship between Kashmir (especially the Valley) and India marked by protests and suppression. Sheikh spent most of his time for the two decades in prison. However, the demand for Plebiscite was capitulated in the Indira Abdullah Accord signed by Afzal Beg of NC and G. Parthasarthi from Indian government on 13th November 1974. This can be seen as the formal end of the independent Kashmir struggle of National Conference or the end of National Popular Perspective.

Other forms of resistance activism in the IOK before and after this accord remained rooted in what can arguably be described as 'two nation' pro-accession to Pakistan perspective. However, by this time the two forms of independent Kashmir politics could be traced gaining ground on the other side of the line of division in Kashmir, the 'Azad' (free) Kashmir or AK[97]. Only a brief discussion of the two forms of the pro-independent Kashmir perspectives in 'Azad' Kashmir is offered here.

[97] The Name 'Azad Kashmir' was later amended by KH Khurshid to Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the AJK which is described from the independent Kashmir perspective as 'Pakistani Occupied Kashmir (POK). The leftist parties in 'Azad Kashmir' use the term Pakistani Occupied Southern Kashmir (POSK) for Azad Kashmir and describe Gilgit Baltistan as Pakistani Occupied Northern Kashmir (PONK).

On this side of the division line politics became almost an exclusive business of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC). As we know, the divide in this party on the independence and accession lines became evident since July 1947. On 18th July the party's central body led by Prof. Ishaq Qureshi, the acting General Secretary and Ch. Hamid Ullah Khan, acting President, passed a resolution for Kashmir to remain independent. However, on the next day those who opposed this resolution met at the residence of Sardar Ibrahim Khan and passed another resolution asking for accession to Pakistan. It appears that the multiple divisions within the Kashmiri politics and inability of Kashmiri politicians to sustain their agreement with Maharaja for constitutional democracy paved the way for the forces of war and extremism to take over Kashmir. While it is evident that Quaid e Azam, Mahatma Gandhi and Nerue were not in favour of forcible accessions of the princely states and despite their disagreements on whether the power of decision lied with the rulers of people agreed nevertheless that the right to decide lied with the states.

Independence Politics in Azad Kashmir

Following the UN brokered ceasefire on 1st January 1949, the politics of independent Kashmir became almost non-existent in 'Azad' Kashmir except Mirpur where the legacy of radical progressive politics was still living. As indicated in the previous chapter some of the prominent leaders of National Conference in Mirpur included Sardar Budh Singh, Raja Mohammed Akbar, Maulana Abdullah Siakhavi, Maulvi Wahab Din, Abdul Aziz Godari, Master Roshan Lal, Tarlok Chand, and Krishan Dev Setti who fought against the suppression of Maharaja system and money lenders since the "No Land Revenue Movement" (*Maliya Bandh Tahreek*) of 1932.

In post division Mirpur, some of the people who rekindled the politics of independence included Mohammed Hussain (commonly known as Comrade Hussain), Abdul Khaliq Ansari Advocate, Babu Abdul Raheem, Sufi Zaman and Mohammed Alam etc. According to Abdul Khaliq Ansari a veteran pro-independence leader, all institutions including police, administration and judiciary were united under the 'Azad' Kashmir and Pakistan governments to suppress pro-independence voices. Political diversity that marked the popular politics

in united Kashmir was replaced by intolerance of the difference.

"This was the time when political activists of the opposite views were blackened their faces and were made to walk in bazaars (markets). They were dishonoured and there was no one to turned to... they were not ready to tolerate the existence of any other political party[98]."

Awami Conference: the first 'nationalist' party in 'Azad' Kashmir?

Abdul Khaliq Ansari further informs us that some disheartened Muslim Conferencees founded the Awami (peoples) Muslim Conference (AMC) in early 1950s. However, as happened with the original Muslim Conference (MC) in 1930s, the religio-political connotation from the name of this AMC was also taken out and was renamed as Awami Conference (AC) within a year of its formation. Social justice and complete independence of Kashmir were made the core objectives of the new

[98] (Ansari, K.A. 2010, in Mard e Khud Agaa; a man of consciousness, Sufi Mohammed Zaman ed. Abdul jabbar Bhatt, p: 23)

party. This arguably the first nationalist party in AJK was later joined by more disillusioned Muslim Conferencees and nationalists in Mirpur including Ghazi Abdur Rehman, Mohammed Bashir Batti, Ghazi Abdul Majeed, Sheikh Mohammed Ayub, Sheikh Abdur Raouf and many others.

Initially the ideology and politics of independence was confined mainly to those baradaries which originally migrated from the Kashmir Valley many generations ago and settled in Mirpur. In Mirpur where group identities were pre dominantly defined by the tribal and clan affiliations or what we commonly known as 'Baradari' identities, all those from the Kashmir Valley were described as ' Kashmiris' in a baradari sense rather than in the political-national sense that was to be developed later.

Another formation of independence politics was initiated inside Pakistan. Soon after the division of Kashmir State, several students and workers were leaving AJK and Gilgit Baltistan for Karachi and other Pakistani cities for education, employment and rebuilding their lives. Mr Amanulla Khan was one such 'immigrant' from Istore region of Gilgit. In the united Kashmir he received, his schooling in Srinagar. Now in Karachi he opened up a school that soon became centre of independent Kashmir politics. He was joined by Mir Abdul Qayum and Mir Abdul Manan who were migrants from the Kashmir Valley and owned a carpet business in

Karachi. They were later to form the Kashmiri Independence Committee in 1960s.

Another form of resistance was taking shape in Poonch. Here the Poonchies who only few years back rose against Maharaja for Pakistan were now protesting against Pakistan for dismissing Sardar Ibrahim Khan, the Prime Minister of the 4th October and President of 24th October 1947 governments. Much is written for the consumption of 'Azad' Kashmiris and Pakistanis about the dismissal of Sheikh Abdulla by his friend PJL Neru in IOK in 1953 but little is known that around the same time the honeymoon between the Pakistani government and their appointed president of 'Azad Kashmir' Sardar Ibrahim Khan also ended up in 'domestic violence'. The dismissal sparked angry protests across 'Azad' Kashmir. Although the documentation of how exactly this rebellion was suppressed is not available, the pamphlets circulated by AJKMC show that impacts were such that this staunch pro accession to Pakistan party's leadership was forced to talk of independence.

The next significant political changes that improved the status of 'Azad' Kashmir and created some space for independence politics within the AJK system were introduced by KH Khurshid in 1960s. It is widely believed in 'Azad Kashmir' that he was dismissed by Pakistan for whispering in Sheikh Abdullah's ears the forbidden word –

Independence – during the latter's visit to Pakistan in 1964.

In Mirpur, the movement to resist Mangla Dam was another significant development that contributed in the rise of independence thinking in Azad Kashmir. The news of building a Dam on River Jhelum at Mangla in Mirpur generated a strong popular reaction. Whatever little material is available on 'Azad' Kashmir politics usually overlooks the connection between Mangla Dam construction and rise of independence politics not only in 'Azad' Kashmir but also amongst (azad) Kashmiri diaspora. A closer study would reveal that it was through the anti-mangla dam movement that the idea and politics of independent Kashmir grew out of the confines of specific baradaries into a wider political ideology first in Azad Kashmir and then through Azad Kashmiri diaspora in UK and later in USA, Europe and Middle East.

After the 1932 'Land Revenue' Movement, it was for the first time that people came out together protesting against authorities as Mirpuris of the State. Col (rtd) Ali Ahmed Shah first defence minister and then briefly the President of 'Azad' Kashmir said:

'Logo yeh Dam Naheen Dam fool hai'
(O people! It is not a Dam. It is a Damn fool).

The Muslim *Conferencees* of Mirpur came at the forefront of resistance movement. This was perhaps first expression by the Mirpuris that their attachment with Pakistan rooted in shared religious identity and expectations for better lives had not eroded their shared Riyasati; State identity which gradually took the form of Kashmiri as political identity.

However, it also became apparent through this experience that Pakistani state can resort to the same measures to have its way as any occupier would and can do this regardless of shared religion. What is of greater importance regarding the independence politics is the fact that Anti-Mangla Dam Movement (AMDM) not only pushed baradaries and clan identities in the background but also opened up space for the hitherto marginalized pro-independence voices. For the first time thousands of 'Mirpuris' listened to pro-independence activists attentively and nodded and shouted in agreement in massive gatherings across Mirpur. In a booklet titled 'The Real Azad Kashmir', Major (rtd) Raja Safdar Abass gives very sentimental account of how the Pakistani authorities were suppressing people violently behind the iron curtain in Azad (free) Kashmir that in reality was not free. The formation of first political force for independence followed the crushing of resistance movement against the building of Mangla Dam.

In a convention held on April 4th and 5th 1965 almost all 'nationalist' Kashmiris in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan and some from UK, including Awami Conference and Independence Committee along with Plebiscite Front merged into a united 'Plebiscite Front' (PF). It was here that Maqbool Bhatt appeared on the scene of independence politics for the first time. He was elected as the publicity secretary and Abdul Khaliq Ansari as the president and Amanullah Khan as the General Secretary of PF.

Later the debates within PF on the need for guerrilla warfare to achieve national liberation were propagated according to Amanullah Khan, the current supreme head of JKLF, by him and Maqbool Bhatt whereas Abdul Khaliq Ansari etc. advocated the peaceful politics for independence. This difference of approach caused some serious frictions within the party. Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhatt went away to form 'National Liberation Front' (NLF) in consultation with Major (rtd) Amanullah Khan who is said was ex 'Azad Faouj' (Indian National Army) and fought against British in Indian National Army led by Subash Chandar Bose.

Maqbool Bhatt and Amanullah Khan, the founders of National Liberation struggle in Kashmir

This small group of NLF then organized a series of guerrilla activities that can be seen as the earliest clashes of pro-independence politics with the Indian state. However, later on this stream of independence politics was to come into conflict with the Pakistani state as well, especially after the hi-jacking of Indian Fokker Ganga by the NLF. The conflict with Pakistani state was best summarized by the legendary Mohammed Maqbool Bhatt. In a

statement submitted before a Pakistani court in relation to Ganga hijacking case he writes:[99]

> "It is a bitter fact that from day one a sort of conflict was sowed between our movement and the ruling bureaucracy and military dictatorship of this country (Pakistan). The fundamental cause of this conflict has been in the difference of purpose and strategy. The rulers of this country out of mere ill intention never liked the ideology of armed struggle that we have chosen for the freedom of our country. Not that they did not like it they tried to block the rise of any real movement[100]."

After Ganga, it seems that the space for independence politics in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan was squeezed to the point where it became impossible for independence activists to operate[101]. A thorough research can trace several

[99] An Indian Fokker plane that was hijacked by the NLF activists Hashim and Ashraf Qureshi in 1971. For details see Asad, S. (2012), Dewanoon Pe Kiya Guzari; what happened to the Devotees, the stories of the torture inflicted upon Kahsmiri liberationsists in the prisons of Pakistan,NIKS, Mirpur, Azad Kashmir.

[100] Asad, S. (2012) op. cit. page: 30

[101] The details of Ganga Hi Jacking and interrogation of the hijackers are recorded in Asad, S. (2012) ' Dewanoon Pe Kiya Guzari' what happened to the Devotees' : the

contributory factors. However, as one of the activists, Mr GM Mir told this author it was mainly due to the state oppression from Pakistan and the breakup of organisational and financial infrastructure of PF & NLF whatever of it existed.[102]

Interestingly it was this strand of Kashmiri politics that later connected independence politics in Diaspora, AJK and JK and also provided the channel through which the Pakistani agencies were able to inject their 'support' for the uprising in IOK in late 1980s.

Ganga Hijackers Hashim and Ashraf with Maqbool Bhatt and other NLF leaders in 1970s

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stories of torture on Kahsmiri liberation fighters in the Pakistani interrogation centres, NIKS, Azad Kashmir.

[102] Op. cit.

Here it also seems relevant to highlight that at the same time as Mangladam was being opposed and KIC and PF were formed in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir respectively, another expression of independence was taking shape in Mirpur, which is usually overlooked by the writers on Kashmiri resistance movement.

The propagators of this strand of independence politics describe it as 'Traqi Passand or progressive politics'. Mainly influenced by the progressive politics in Pakistan where it came from Russia and China, it was organised into Kashmir Students Union in early 1960s in Old Mirpur College. Later the name was changed to Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (NSF) and many of its founding leaders including Mumtaz Hussain Rathore (later Prime Minister of AJK), Javed Nizami and Ch. Abdul Majeed (Current Prime Minister of 'Azad' Kashmir) were to become leaders of Pakistan People's Party in Azad Kashmir in early 1970s[103].

The NSF tradition of independence politics also later provided cadre for such pro-independence left groups as Jammu Kashmir Peoples National Party

[103] One of the founders of NSF, Khuwaja Shaukat became associated with Muslim Conference but kept strong independence rhetoric till his death in Huddersfield in 2008. His sister Naheed later became the woman minister of MC and a brother Mr Sohil Shaheen a charismatic activist of National Students Federation, recently joined Muslim Conference.

(JKPNP)[104] and Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP).

While a closer analysis can show several differences between the two major traditions of independence politics in terms of their ideology, political perception, priorities, strategy and tactics, the major difference that appeared over the years has been in the emphasis on armed struggle (liberation politics) focusing mainly on the Indian occupation by the NLF (later JKLF) and relatively peaceful unarmed protest actions with strong socialist rhetoric by the NSF challenging the Pakistani claims and hegemony over Kashmir, mainly in 'Azad' Kashmir or POK as the NSF activists would call it.

The 'liberation' politics was born out of Plebiscite Front that was an offshoot of National Conference, which was expressively a secular, nationalist, democratic and progressive political party with a very dominant leader Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah[105]. The PF was originally formed in mid 1950s in the Indian occupied part of Kashmir by Sheikh's deputy Afzal Beig when relationships between Kashmir National Conference and Indian National Congress (personified in Abdullah Nehru friendship) became strained after the dismissal of Sheikh in 1953 for allegedly working on a US plan

[104] Later divided into JKPNP and UK (United Kashmir) PNP

[105] Perhaps he was too popular to be challenged and with limitations in managing popularity and power democratically.

for independent Kashmir[106]. The demand articulated by PF was a Plebiscite for people to decide the future status of Kashmir state as was promised in the United Nation resolutions. The PF formed in 'Azad' Kashmir also made similar demands with strong ideological and some organisational links with the PF in the IOK. Sufi Mohammed Zaman, (one of the Muslim Conferencees who turned 'Mahziyeh' (Frontys) or 'liberationiyeh') and Abdul Khaliq Ansari were especially respected by many people for their vocal campaigning for social justice. To some extent these leaders furthered the Muslim Conference and National Conference traditions of 1930s era of Raja Akbar and Sardar Budh Singh etc. They managed to link daily life socio-economic and political issues with the 'national political question'.

In 1965 when the Kashmir Independence Committee (KIC) joined hands with PF in AJK, a significant shift took place in the politics of PF. Firstly, the new activists of KIC led by Amanullah Khan wanted to steer PF away from Sheikh's name and politics because of the euphoria created by Muslim Conference and Pakistani rulers that Sheikh Abdullah was a traitor who aligned with

[106] Schofield, V. (2000), Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the unending war, I.B.Tauris, London. P:92 also see Kaul, M.K. (2009) Jammu and Kashmir in the Shadow of Imperialism available on http://jammukashmir.homestead.com/J-K-09.html

'Hindu' Congress over 'Muslim' League, hence falling in the 'two nation' trap.

Secondly, they were of the view that no one was going to pay any attention to the Plebiscite demands made through statements, public meetings and demonstrations. They advocated that the only way to achieve freedom for Kashmir was to fight for it with arms as other national liberation movements across the world did or were doing. Failing to win majority within the PF, Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhatt along with few other diaspora Kashmiris in Pakistan formed an underground armed group the 'National Liberation Front' (NLF) in 1966.

Except Maqbool Bhatt most of these were the activists of Kashmir Independence Committee (KIC) set up earlier by Amanullah Khan. From here on the armed concept of national liberation gained popularity and the slogan 'Azadi ka ek hi dhang Guerrilla Jang (Guerrilla warfare is the only way to freedom) echoed in all education institutions across AJK and reached out to UK as well. I can recall these slogans being chanted in college in late 1970s but of course they were originally raised soon after 1966 when Maqbool Bhatt crossed into IOK with Aurgangzeb and Subedar Kala Khan.

The point needs to be noted here is that by mid 1970s the independence politics was grown out of PF and 'Kashmiri' baradaries. By now the idea of independent Kashmir was taken up by the

students from various backgrounds across 'azad' Kashmir. Although championed by National Students federation (NSF) there was significant support for independence amongst other student organisations including such staunch pro Pakistani groups as Muslim Students Federation (MSF) a student wing of Muslim Conference of Sardar Abdul Qayum and Azad Students Federation (ASF) the student wing of Azad Muslim Conference led by Choudhary Noor Hussain at the time undisputed leader of Jatt baradari of Mirpur who was less enthusiastic for accession with Pakistan but also not overtly advocating independence. Indeed as the following incident narrated by Liaqat Choudhary, the founder of ASF evidently shows that the sentiment for independent Kashmir was not confined to NSF. It also inspired those in MSF and ASF.

Following the Ganga affair when NLF and PF were almost removed from the small space they created in 'Azad' Kashmir, the NSF and pro-independence students from other groups remained resilient in their activism and used every opportunity to raise the voice for independence. One such opportunity the students used to propagate the demand for independent Kashmir came up with the visit of the heads of states of Islamic countries to Mirpur early 1970s following the Islamic Summit in Lahore called by the then most popular leader of Pakistan and Peoples Party, Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Prior to arrival of the honourable guests all the main student activists of NSF and those known for their activism in MSF and ASF were detained lest they do something that might embarrass the Pakistani rulers. The detainees, according to Liaqat Choudhary including himself, Gafar Inqalabi, Qamar Mirza, Ikram Mirza and Zahid Kamal. However, it seems that students were ahead of the authorities.

Soon the convoy reached to *Chowk Shaheedan*; martyrs square, one of the active student leader of MSF, Raja Imtiaz Kamal jumped on to the bonnet of slow moving car of Imam e Kaaba and threw the pamphlet demanding independent Kashmir through the window of religious leader's vehicle. As per plan the other students who had pamphlets hidden in their socks also approached the slowly moving cars behind the Imam and handed them to the heads of many Islamic states. The police realized what was going on only after the 'operation pamphlet' was completed. Later Imtiaz Kamal was also arrested and taken to the detainees at Mirpur police station. They were released later on that day only to be rearrested after few days by the notorious Federal Security Forced (FS) set up by Bhutto government apparently to deal with 'security' issues but actually to silence the opposition. This time they were taken to Dulahee Camp, one of the most notorious interrogation centres and were kept

there in miserable conditions for two weeks. They were released only when the agitation for their release by students became uncontrollable and embarrassing for Pakistani authorities.

While the students carried on promoting and projecting the politics of independence, the PF and NLF could not recover from the aftermaths of Ganga episode. It was around this time that Dr Farooq Abdullah, the then 'heir apparent' of Sheikh Abdullah came from Britain to attend annual convention of PF of which he was a member in Mirpur. During this trip he did a tour of azad Kashmir with the leaders of PF and NLF including Maqbool Bhatt and Amanullah Khan. Soon after that, according to Sadiq Mirza, the current head of PF UK, the PF UK sent a delegation to Srinagar for inviting Sheikh Abdullah to UK in order to uplift the PF and propagate the independence politics. The Sheikh promised to consider the offer seriously but for the reasons only known to him, signed the 'Indira Abdullah Accord' in 1975, which was the end of Plebiscite, demand and acceptance of Kashmir as part of the Indian Union.

It was against this background that PF Britain invited Amanullah Khan, Abdul Khaliq Ansari and GM Mir. The former two got entry clearance to England whereas the later was refused Visa[107].

[107] Conversations with Mirza Sadiq, the president of PF Britian and the main sponsor of PF activities in Britian.

Maqbool Bhatt crossed back to IOK despite having a death sentence hanging on him in that part of Kashmir. This was proved as his last crossing.

The NSF also suffered a serious blow when almost all of its founding and senior leaders joined Bhutto's PPP in 1973-74. It is claimed by many activists that Maqbool Bhatt was also offered to join PPP and in return get whatever post he liked but he refused. However, as mentioned above the resistance amongst students could not be uprooted completely and soon the NSF revived and regained its dominant position and status in colleges across AJK despite the formation of Peoples Students Federation by the Peoples Party of Pakistan.

The independence politics also got boost when the New Muslim Conference led by Sardar Abdul Qayum and Azad Muslim Conference by Ch. Noor Hussain along with several other electionist politicians stood shoulder to shoulder with student leaders and NLF and PF activists to oppose Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's drive to curtail the autonomous identity of Azad Kashmir and change it into a province of Pakistan. Several activists were sent to Dulahee Camp and tortured but the Province attempts were successfully blocked.

Independent Kashmir politics and British Kashmiris

As detailed in the British Kashmiris chapter in this collection, by the 1960s the process of migration from Mirpur to Britain was developed into chain migration which involved arrival of Kashmiris from Mirpur through different ties based on kinship, village and friendship etc. 1970s was the decade of family reunions that strengthened the process of settlement and weakened the aspirations for 'going back'. On the political front three forms of Kashmiri political activism could be traced in the Britain from then on.

Firstly, the anti-India activism in the context of two nation theory that demanded India to leave Kashmir for Pakistan. This was the continuation of Muslim Conference but under the influence and directions of Pakistan mostly through the Pakistani diplomats in UK. One of the most prominent activists of Kashmir Muslim Conference in Britain was Raja Mohammed Azam, uncle of Raja Imtiaz Kamal who jumped on the Immam e Kaba's car at Martyrs Chowk Mirpur in 1974.

The second form was emerging from the radical, left revolutionary and anti-racist politics of Britain. Its earliest organizational expression was the United Kashmir Liberation Front (UKLF) which

was formed by Master Abdul Majeed, ex school teacher, Moulvi Khalil (son of Abdullah Siakhavi one of the leaders of 'No Revenue Movement' of 1932) Mohammed Younis Taryabi, factory workers, Mushtaq Kashmiri (son of comrade Mohammed Hussain, one of the earliest pro-independence activists in post 1947 'Azad' Kashmir who was saved by the people from police brutality) law graduate, and Nazir Nazish, sociology graduate involved in students politics. All UKLF founders were from Dadyal area of Mirpur. In Britain they were inspired by left and anti-racism politics and in Kashmir by Maqbool Bhatt and his ideology of national liberation with strong anti-imperialist tendencies. Many of them worked closely with the Indian Workers Association (IWA) until 1970s when they along with some British Pakistani leftists formed Pakistan and Kashmir Workers Association. Soon the Pakistani and Kashmiri workers Associations departed but maintained working relations as well as with the Indian Workers Association. Currently Indian Workers Association exists in several towns across Britain as an established and recognized welfare organization while PWA and KWA or non-existent beyond one or two of their veteran leaders. However, their influence can be traced in several Kashmiri organisations across Britain.

In 1984, the KWA was merged in JKLF but later it was revived and currently exists in its founding

father Mohammed Younis Tarayabi and Wahid Kashir, who arrived to UK in 1990s with National Students Federation (NSF) and JKLF background. One of the most prominent contributions of KWA after revival has been the initiation of Kashmir National Identity Campaign (KNIC) in 1999 in the leadership of Younis Taryabi, Saeed Hussain and Shafaq Hussain[108].

The third strand was that of Mahaz or Plebiscite Front (PF), which existed in Britain since 1965. Its first President was Chaudhary Gafoor and played leading role in campaign for the release of Ganga Hijackers in early 1970s. Once Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the head of the IOK PF and National Conference, failed to fulfil his promise of coming to Britain to lead the emerging campaign for independent Kashmir, the PF Britain called over Abdul Khaliq Ansari and Amanullah Khan. After several rounds of debates and discussions the Plebiscite Front Britain was changed to Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front in 1977 with Mr Abdul Jabbar Butt (Younger brother of Sufi Zaman a radical social activist in Mirpur first of Muslim Conference and then PF) as its founding president and Nazir ul Haq Nazish (also from a progressive politicised family from 1930s movement) as

[108] This author was one of the contributors in the debates that brought consensus on the significance of recognition in Britain for the British Kashmiri community.

secretary general. Amanullah Khan was employed as editor for the 'Voice of Kashmir', JKLF magazine. He became the first paid worker of any Kashmir political party and perhaps remains the last one as well, as this tradition and the magazine died with the deportation of Amanullah Khan in 1984. Later he became the president of JKLF and soon most of the 'leftists' left JKLF in the leadership of founding President Jabbar Bhatt. For some time this group was known as JKLF Bani or 'founding' or Jabbar Butt group. Later it was renamed as Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (JKNLF), one of the names got defeated earlier for JKLF on the grounds that it gave some sort of militant connotations that did not seem appropriate outside of Kashmir.

Soon the JKLF became fairly popular and one of the largest Kashmiri organisation in Britain. Indeed a close study would reveal that although overtly JKLF was more concerned with the question of Kashmiri independence, it made significant contribution in paving the way for Kashmiris participation in British politics. The first Asian Lord Mayor Lord Ajeeb, the first Muslim member of House of Lords Lord Nazir Ahmed and now Lord Qurban Ahmed all initiated their politics from the JKLF platform. Dozens of councillors across Britain also entered in British politics through JKLF. Several JKLF activists can be

traced in other walks of British life. Militancy was never on JKLF agenda in Britain.

On 3rd February 1984 an unknown group Kashmir Liberation Army (KLA) kidnapped, Rovindera Mahtre, a senior diplomat from Indian's Birmingham consulate. The KLA demanded the release of Mohammed Maqbool Bhatt from the Tihar prison Delhi, the capital city of India. However, within few days Mr Mahtre was found dead in a field in the suburbs of Birmingham. To avenge the murder, the Indian government of Indira Ghandi hanged Maqbool Bhatt on 11th February 1984 leaving aside all the legalities of the case a review application for which was under consideration on the grounds of some serious flaws in the original trial. These events while tainted the Kashmiri political activism in Britain with violence and militancy also enhanced interest in the independent Kashmir and some young people of Kashmiri heritage across Britain became aware of, and got involved in JKLF.

This also tarnished the community image in the eyes of the British authorities. British police rounded up several activists across the Britain including Amanullah Khan and Hashim Qureshi, one of the two Ganga Hijackers, who was visiting UK. Mohammed Riaz Malik, Abdul Qayum Raja, Sadiq Bhatti, Majid Ansari and Janhgir Mirza were on remand when Younis Taryabi, Zuber Ansari and Mohammed Nazim Bhatti initiated a defence

campaign. The campaign managed to convince a large number of people that those arrested were not responsible for what happened.

Born from this politics of violence was the politics of election when the Defence Campaign launched Jangir Mirza, Sadiq Bhatti and Majid Ansari in the local election of 1985. Despite being not from larger baradries or clans, they came second after labour. The campaign was later reorganised and renamed as Free Riaz and Qayum (FRaQ) Campaign[109]. The FRAQ also decided to participate in elections.

This enhanced the participation of British Kashmiris in local election politics. In 1998 elections the FRAQ candidates included Allah Ditta (literally mean 'God given' and commonly known as Chacha; paternal uncle), Mohammed Nazim Bhatti (JKLF), Abdul Rashid and Zahida Habib. While the later three lost by small margins, Chacha Allah Ditta won a seat in council for FRAQ. Taking the politics of election forward, Mohammed Nazim Bhatti formed Justice for Kashmiri Community Campaign (JKCC) in 1999 and candidates included Shaukat Raja, Nazim Bhatti and Zahida Habib and few more. Nazim Bhatti and Raja Shaukat won their seats. Interestingly the JKCC attracted support from other Birmingham communities and its name was

[109] This author proposed the name as in Urdu it means separation

changed to Justice Party to include wider communities with Chaudhary Mohammed Ashraf as chairperson and Muzafar Kiyani as Secretary General. Chaudhary Mohammed Israr was also its main activist.

By 2000 the JKCC councillors rose to five when Chaudhary Mohammed Saeed, Zakir Ullah and Chaudhary Mohammed Khaliq also were elected. The local Liberal Party tried to incorporate the JKCC but failed. However, in 2003 three of JP Councillors including Raja Shoukat, Ch. Mohammed Saeed and Zakir Ullah defected to Liberals and Nazim Bhatti left the politics. Party still exists on papers as Peoples Justice Party (PJP) but does not participate in elections anymore.

Amanullah Khan was deported from Britain in 1984 and Qayum Raja, Riaz Malik and Saddique Bhatti were sentenced for their role in Mahatre Murder. Hashim Qureshi was barred from entering Britain.

In late 1980s a massive uprising erupted against the Indian occupation in Kashmir valley apparently under the leadership of JKLF, enhanced the popularity of independence politics further amongst Kashmiris in AJK and UK. Within few years JKLF became the largest Kashmiri organization in Britain with 32 active branches and paid membership of over 2000 across UK.

The 1990 march from POK to cross the division line from Chokotti to IOK was another historic step

by the JKLF that mobilised hundreds of thousands of 'Azad Kashmiris' and UK Kashmiris. However, when Pakistani army opened fire to stop the marchers killing about a dozen marchers the JKLF leadership called off the march and nothing followed up.

The rating of JKLF however dived down when covert deals its leadership made with ISI, the Pakistani intelligence services became an open secret first in Pakistan and AJK and later across the world. This increased the distance between JKLF and other pro-independent Kashmir groups in AJK and UK. The leadership of JKLF was criticized as carrying forward the Pakistani agenda in IOK in the name of independence. The JKLF leadership responded by claiming that they never compromised their position on independence. When Pakistan pushed JKLF back and brought Hizbul Mujahidin forward, the JKLF suffered further.

In 1992 when the panel of candidates who were seen as 'anti-Amanullah' (the party head) won JKLF elections in UK, Amanullah Khan dissolved the British chapter strangely not through any official communication to the party but through a press release prominently published in the Pakistani daily The Jang London. Of thirty two branches eighteen defied the ordinance as an authoritarian act while 14 branches went along. The party never recovered from this one of the

major splits. This was soon followed by another split rooted in the differences over the nature of struggle. In 1994 Yasin Malik, one of the four pioneers of Kashmiri youth who crossed over the ceasefire line to Pakistani occupied (azad) Kashmir in 1987 denounced militancy after his release from prison and Amannullah Khan denounced Yasin Malik giving birth to Amanullah Khan and Yasin Malik factions of JKLF. This caused further disintegration of the organisation in Britain where each fiction was reduced to few active leaders including Shabir Choudhary, Younis Chaudhary, Zafar Khan, Azmat Khan, Abdul Rehman and Mumtaz Rathore. This was coincided with the rise of some pro-Pakistani Valley Kashmiris who were not comfortable with 'Mirpuri' Kashmiris' criticism of Pakistani occupation who they claim was supporting their fight against the Indian rule in the Valley. They were included Dr Ayub Takkar, Barrister Majeed Taramboo, Professor Mrs and Mr Nazir Shawal and Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai. Dr Takkar championed the cause of Kashmir from the platform of World Kashmir Freedom Movement (WKFM) in partnership with Jamat e Islami of Pakistan within the framework of Pakistani policy on Kashmir rooted in 'Two Nation Theory' and the pan-Islamist rhetoric till his death in 2004. Prof. Nazir Shawal, Dr GN Fai and Barrister Majeed Taranboo became the heads of Kashmir lobbying Centres in London, New York and Brussels

respectively. While internally Kashmiris of different political persuasions accused them for getting funds from ISI and indeed by 2010 the entire story of the rise and fall of the freedom struggle in the Kashmir Valley was well known, the outside world became aware of this in 2012 when Dr Ghulan Nabi Fai was convicted of lobbying for Pakistani government for a substantial sum of money. Meanwhile Amanullah Khan also admitted that JKLF did have ties with ISI in the second addition of his autobiography, Johd e Musalsal; the constant struggle.

In 2011 the Yasin Malik and Amanullah Khan factions of JKLF were reunited after couple of failed attempts and subsequently the factions in Britain have also been united. However, JKLF is not the only pro-independence body of Kashmiris in Britain. The Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP), Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (recently changed to Council) (JKNLC) and United Kashmir Peoples National Party, Kashmir Peoples National Party (used to be one) and Kashmir National party (KNP) are also significantly active groups.

JKNAP is the continuation of NSF beyond student life and NLC is the continuation of JKLF Jabbar Butt group from 1980s and in Azad Kashmir it is headed for many years by Shaukat Maqbool, the younger son of the iconic Maqbool Bhatt.

Currently there are nearly a dozen pro-independence groups and alliances exist in Britain with varying degrees of activism. They include four groups of JKLF:

1. Jammu Kashmir Liberation Fron headed by Azmat Khan, Ch. Younis now a local councillor from Conservative Party from Blackburn with leading role also played by Azmat Khan;
2. JKLF (Amman), headed by Mehmood Hussain, with Faiz, Farooq and Zafar Khan as leading activists. Now Yasin and Amman group are reunited and others are being persuaded to come back.
3. JKLF (Turambo), Headed by Majeed Turambo with leading role played by Mumtaz Ahmed Rathore and Ayub Rathore.
4. JKLF (United), Headed by Ch. Abdul Rehman with Rasab Kashmiri. Rasab Kashmiri is gone back to unified JKLF.

   As per my knowledge, there is no branch of JKLF (Rauf) in UK.

   All of the above now united except Majeed Turanmboo group with Azmat Khan President and Tahseen Gilani Sect. Gen.

   Then there are other pro-independence groups mainly the branches of their 'mother' parties/groups in Kashmir mainly in Azad Kashmir. They include:

1. Kashmiri Workers Association (KWA) at present led by Younis Taryabi and Wahid Kashir. The only British Kashmiri group that was a product of British conditions and never had organisational links with any party in Azad Kashmir.
2. Jammu Kashmir Peoples National Party (JKPNP) headed by Tahir Bostan and Nazir Nazish
3. Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP), the 'mass' party of the Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (NSF) led by Sadiq Subhani, Shahid Hashmi, Mohammed Zahid Lone and Masood Chudhary. Recently has JKNLC led by Shoukat Maqbool Butt, Mehmood Kashmiri, Jabbar Butt and Mushtaq Hussain, merged in NAP.
4. United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP) headed by Shaukat Kashmiri
5. Kashmir National Party (KNP) Founded by Dr Shabir Choudhary, Abass Butt, Nazim Bhatti and Zubair Ansari, all ex JKLF leading activists broke away in 1992 when Amanullah Khan dissolved JKLF.
6. Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (JKNLF) headed by Mehmood Kashmiri. It recently has gone through name change in Azad Kashmir and is named as Jammu

Kashmir National Liberation Conference (JKNLC).

7. Jammu Kashmir Freedom Movement (JKFM) led by Haji Hamid of Rochdale and Ghulam Hussain now a labour councillor from Leeds.
8. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation League (JKLL) headed by Alam brothers and Dr Misfer who has also become a labour party county councillor for Lancashire.
9. Association of British Kashmiris (ABK) formed in 2001 with the aim to bring all British Kashmiris to a common platform with little success. ABK is currently led by Shafaq Hussain former KWA chair and once a MP candidate from Birmingham, Abid Hussain Hashmi ex JKLF senior leader and Safdar Mir, a former Birmingham councillor for Liberal Democrats.
10. Kashmir Liberation Organisation (KLO) founded and headed by Najeeb Asfar and Abid Zaman.
11. Kashmir Independence Movement (KIM) Founded by Babu Rahim in 1960s and now led by his son Khalid Rahim.
12. Kashmir National Identity Campaign (KNIC), initiated by the Kashmiri Workers Association (KWA) this non-partisan campaign was later furthered with the support of almost all Kashmiri groups in UK

regardless of ideological differences. Shafaq Hussain, Saeed Hussain and Barrister Asif led this campaign at different times. Currently it is coordinated by Ali Adalat, now a labour councillor from Rochdale.

Some of the British Kashmiri pro-independence leaders

13. Abdul Jabbar Bhatt formed Jammu Kashmir National Independence Alliance (JKNIA) an alliance of pro-independence groups on the instructions of Yasin Malik, chair of his faction of JKLF after he was requested

by some British Kashmiri activists to form a wider pro-independence political party. Two other 'alliances' also existed briefly in UK include International Kashmir Alliance (IKA) led by Dr Nazir Gilani and Shabir Chaudhary and International Kashmir Front (IKF) by Afzal Tahir. Of course, there are scores of 'pro-accession to Pakistan' groups and 'pro-self-determination' groups actively exist in UK. However, it is not in the scope of this article to bring them into discussion.

Recently Kashmiri workers Association (KWA) led by Younis Taryaby has launched the third phase of Azad Kashmir movement. According to Younis taryaby, the head of KWA, this phase of Azad Kashmir Movement aims at working:

"towards building a revolutionary party of the masses of the people of every occupied part of Kashmir…[to]…re-establishing the legal, constitutional and representative government of the Kashmiri people – the Azad Kashmir Government in any one of three occupied parts

of Kashmir as a first and foremost stage to make the liberation of other occupied parts of Kashmir feasible"[110].

However, this revolutionary path has yet not attracted any significant support from Kashmiri activists anywhere in the world except some core members of KWA.

The recent unification of JKLF has activated some of the Kashmiris in Britain and made other parties as JKNAP to form their units across UK. However, one feature of the pro-independence parties that is attracting criticism from younger people and women is their detachment from the wider political space of Britain even the left and anti-establishment space. However, growing number of ex members of various pro-independence parties being elected in local councils and appointed as Lords is expected to enhance the involvement of pro-independent Kashmir politics in the wider British political space[111].

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[110] Tarayabi, Y, (2010), Master Majeed and Revolutionary Struggle of British Kashmiris.

[111] Both members of house of lords Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham and Qurban Hussain of Luton started their political life in JKLF.

The lack of involvement with issues facing British Kashmiri community here is perhaps one of the main reasons that number of young people in pro-independence organizations have gone down. Almost all of the pro-independence groups in Britain are made up mainly of those Kashmiris who migrated from Kashmir as students, high skilled migrants or fiancées or spouses. It seems that the British born youth of Kashmiri heritage are although well attached with Azad Kashmir through family ties are more inclined to the anti-war and Islamist politics than secular Kashmiri independence groups and politics in Britain.

However, a significant interest amongst British Kashmiri youth can also be noted in their Kashmir identity and mainstream British politics mainly of labour followed by the conservative and left groups including the Respect Party leader of which George Galloway won Bradford west bye-election with massive majority mainly on the back of young Muslims mostly of (Azad) Kashmiri heritage. They also want to know about Kashmir but the pro-independence leadership in Britain has not been very successful in talking to the British born Kashmiris. This of course does not mean

that young people do not want to. They are not actively involved because they don't have the information as a 21 years old labour Cllr Mariyam said in her speech in JKLF's annual convention on 1st July 2012 of 'course we want to know but we are not told. We support Palestine and want to support Kashmir as well. You elder men talk to each other. Talk to us as well'. Of course, talking also involves listening and that is something pro independent Kashmiri activists in Britain need for any meaningful engagement of the wider community.

As Mr Shoib, the great grandson of legendary Raja Mohammed Akbar of Mirpur said in a meeting of Kashmiri activists in Birmingham, our history has not been transferred to us. It is about time that some mechanism is built to do so or this will be the last generation with some interest in Kashmir, its freedom, identity and heritage.

By 1980s, the liberation politics also regained its grounds in Azad Kashmir when JKLF was formed there by one of the Hi Jackers Hashim Qureshi and the Poonch and Muzaffarabad divisions got actively involved in the independence politics. It seems that since

1980s the epicenter of independence politics in Azad Kashmir was moved out from Mirpur to Kotli, Rawalakot and Muzafarabad etc. such charismatic leaders as Rashid Hassrat took the lead in JKLF and Gulnawaz Butt injected new life in NSF.

Indeed the reaction to the execution of Maqbool Bhatt on 11th February 1984 by the Indian government showed that independence politics in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan and diaspora in UK was grown too strong to be suppressed or crushed by the Pakistani authorities. All district and tehsil headquarters in AJK witnessed massive outpour of people in the streets and at some places such as Kotali the protests turned violent and the anger of youth was not confined against India only. The Pakistani flags were also burnt and along with the slogan of Go India Go, Go Pakistan Go was chanted. Therefore, supporting the disenchanted youth of the Valley after the massive rigging by the Indian National Congress and Kashmir National Conference in 1987 election to keep Muslim United Front (MUF) out was not only a long awaited opportunity for Pakistani agencies to facilitate

'revolt' against India in the Valley but also to divert the rising tide of independence in 'Azad Kashmir'.

After 20 years and over 100.000 people dead and many more injured and torn apart families and large scale destruction, the idea of independence has gain greater ground in there as well. JKLF has also emerged as the largest pro-independence organization in the Valley. However, the challenge that JKLF and other pro-independence forces are facing across the divided state is how to engage state subjects in Ladakh, Jammu and Gilgit Baltistan in the independent state movement. Currently, none of the pro-independence organisations has any meaningful support in the state beyond Azad Kashmir and the Valley of Kashmir.

Amongst the diaspora Kashmiris, various initiatives and activists have become more connected than ever and their awareness of day to day happenings in the Valley and other parts of the state have increased many folds thanks to the new media. However, the awareness also includes being aware of the issues and contradictions that threatens the politics of independence and the dream of a united independent Kashmir consisting of the Valley, Jammu, Ladkah, Gilgit Baltistan and

azad Kashmir. The independence politics is threatened not only by the Indian and Pakistani forces but also by the pro accession to Pakistan and India politics that of course is far more resourceful and with greater access to international political players and power centers. In this context the coming few years are very crucial for the independence politics especially in terms of developing a realistic and inclusive analysis of the ground realities and issues facing Kashmiris across the state and building strong organizational infrastructure to resist and challenge the Indian and Pakistani hegemony in relation to the Kashmiri political as well as academic and media discourses.

Kashmir Question

The whole truth

This article was originally written in 2000. Presented below is a slightly improvised version.

My two neighbours have occupied my home
One has taken over the roof and other the rooms
I the owner of the house am forced to stand out in the yard and watch helplessly

This is English translation of a poem by a Kashmiri poet Ahmed Shamim in PAHARI, the mother tongue of the majority of British Kashmiris, also called Mirpuri in Britain. Due to my limited poetic vocabulary, the above translation does not carry the message in its entirety, particularly the cultural undertones.
However, it does explain the daily skirmishes between the armies of India and Pakistan on the bloody line of division in Kashmir. Whether it is the Indians or Pakistanis who open fire, it is the Kashmiris who are killed, wounded or forced to displacement and turn into refugees in their own land on both sides of the line of division, now in 65th year of its existence. This article attempts to explore and explain the Kashmir question through

the ideology and struggle for unification and independence as it has been evolved since the emergence of popular politics in 1930s.

What is the Kashmir Problem?

The rulers of India and Pakistan would like the world to believe that Kashmir is fundamentally a bilateral territorial issue. Unfortunately, most of the world does believe them. For us Kashmiris, however, the problem is rooted in the occupation and division of our country. For us it is a question of over 15 million people's right to unification and independence.

On 15th of August 1947 when India and Pakistan were born out of an anti-colonial movement, Kashmir like over 500 other princely states (not part of the British India) had number of options available. They had the right to remain independent, join India or Pakistan or to forge a federation or confederation of all or some of the princely states. Indeed this last option was considered however never agreed. Among other options majority of states too fragile to exist as independent countries joined either India or Pakistan voluntarily or were forced to take this course.

In the case of Kashmir, the ruling King Maharaja Hari Singh representing the historical construction of Jammu and Kashmir State along with his Prime

Minister Pundit Kak Chand as well as all Kashmiri political parties born out of a popular political process stood for independence. Indeed the government of Kashmir led by the Maharaja offered the new neighbouring governments of Indian and Pakistan a standstill agreement that meant to continue the arrangements Kashmir had with the British colonial government in united India. Pakistan accepted the offer while India asked for more time to kak. At this stage, Kashmir existed as an independent country with an internal political struggle for democratization and responsible governance. This struggle that shaped and was shaped by over half a dozen political parties reflected all colours of the modern political spectrum moving towards a multiparty political system. The major political parties, which formed and led the public opinion at this stage, included All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC), All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (AJKNC) and All Jammu and Kashmir and Mazdur Kissan (workers and peasants) Conference (AJKMKC).

Maharaja had no choice but to negotiate with Kashmiri political parties to work out a power sharing formula. Two of the major three parties mentioned above agreed to share power with Maharaja as a symbolic head. The Mazdur Kissan Conference however demanded a complete

abolition of the monarchy. Until now, the accession issue had no significance in the mainstream Kashmiri political process and debates. The issue at the centre of political activism in Kashmir was how to transform a despotic rule into democratic, responsible and in the case of MKC a socialist one. Ideologically Muslim Conference claimed to represent the sentiments of Muslims of Kashmir hence closer to the Indian Muslim League. The National Conference on the other hand shared secular socialistic political ideology with the Indian National Congress. The MKC carried the banner of leftist perspective. However, none of these Kashmiri parties had any organizational ties with those in the British India or demonstrated any wish for accession to either India or Pakistan until many years after.

In fact, the acting President and the Secretary of the Muslim Conference Choudhary Hamid Ullah and Professor M Ishaq Qureshi respectively met Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of Pakistan Movement on 11th of July 1947. According to Prof. Ishaq who narrated the events of 1940s in details to this writer in 1998, this was the first official meeting of Quaid e Azam in his capacity of the governor general of Pakistan.

In the meeting, Mr Jinnah strongly advised the Kashmiri leaders to not cause problems for

Maharaja and back his efforts for independence. A statement outlining Muslim League's policy on the issue of princely states was issued and printed in various newspapers including Pakistan Times founded by Mr Jinnah and edited at that time by the famous progressive poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz on 18th of July 1947[112].

According to Mr Qureshi, majority of the then Muslim Conference central leadership agreed to take Mr Jinnah's advice however, some refused and called another meeting on 19th July 1947 at the house of Sardar Ibrahim Khan and passed a resolution for accession to Pakistan. Prior to this National Conference and MKC also clearly expressed their inclination for independent Kashmir on several occasions. Indeed the National Conference Manifesto 'Naya Kashmir', the New Kashmir, clearly envisaged a British style multi party parliamentary system with Maharaja as the figurehead.

In this context Kashmir became independent state with the rise of Indian flag on 15th of August 1947. All treaties with British crown came to an end. Maharaja was in control of government affairs and Kashmiri political parties were engaged in a popular struggle to gain power. Kashmir was

[112] While I have not come across the Pakistan Times of 18th July there is such a statement in the 18th June 1947 issue (see appendix).

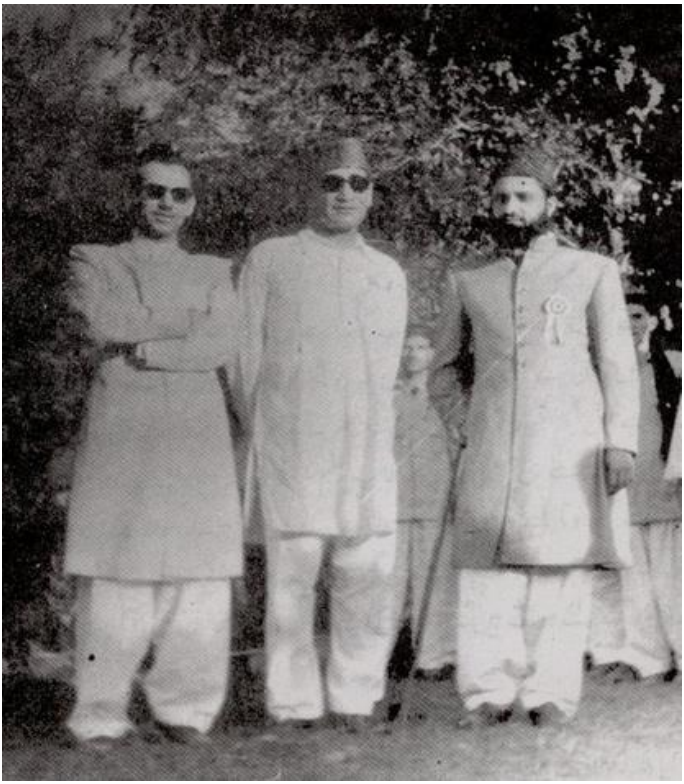
clearly moving towards a multiparty democratic society. For two months the power struggle in Kashmir took various turns and twists including the revolts and subsequent declarations of provisional governments in Gilgit- Baltistan and in the areas later termed as 'Azad' (free) Kashmir.

What proves that the political struggle in Kashmir was separate and distinct from the happenings in the British India is the fact which leaders such as M.K. Gandhi also recognized that Kashmir remained an island of communal harmony and ethnic co-existence in the sea of blood unleashed by the communal zeal and hostilities in the regions known at that time as 'The British India'. Up Until October 20th 1947 there was no communal violence reported in Kashmir. Agitation against Maharaja rule in general but specially the exploitative practice of moneylending and high handedness of officials in extracting revenue etc continued in different forms and shapes and in some regions especially in Poonch and Mirpur started organizing into 'Azad Fauj' – The Free Army by the end of September 1947. It appears from the oral and written accounts of the happenings in Jammu, Mirpur and Muzafarabad that the communal tension that later caused these massacre was spilt over in the State with the influx of refugees forced from their homes in India and Pakistan and sought asylum in the relatively

peaceful Kashmir. They were followed by the communally motivated invasion of the tribes from Pakistan and the Gann Singes from India. Kashmiris of all religions even at this stage were not involved in any communal riots. Pakistan invaded under the pretext of saving the Muslim 'brethren' from the Hindu ruler and the Indians to protect the secular character of Kashmiri society under attack from Pakistani forces. Both occupied chunks of the state of Jammu and Kashmir while Kashmiris, the owner of the home were forced to take the course of action prescribed for them by the occupiers of their home. From then on, the real issue of restoration of the unification and independence of Kashmir has continuously and consciously been mystified through philosophical, contrasting and conflicting claims over Kashmir. The result has been under development of not only Kashmir and Kashmiris but also majority of the Indian and Pakistani peoples as huge proportions of the Indian and Pakistani budgets are eaten by armies built to keep whatever of Kashmir they have and to take more.

Had the Kashmir problem been a question of accession or ideological affinities of two major Kashmiri parties with the Indian Secularists or Pakistani Islamists, it would have been resolved by now. For the division reflected the general divide of regional, ideological and religious differences in

Kashmir. The secular and religious elements in Kashmiri society, which preferred India to Pakistan, went under Indian and those seen as favouring Pakistan under Pakistani occupation. The National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah was given charge of the affairs in the Indian occupied Kashmir (IOK) while the Muslim Conference led by Sardar Ibrahim was given power to rule the Pakistani Occupied Kashmir (POK). The Gilgit and Baltistan were brought under the direct control of Pakistan through the notorious Karachi Agreement on 28th of April 1948 between Sardar Ibrahim and Mushtaq Gurmani the Pakistani Minister for Kashmir affairs. Although Sardar Ibrahim Khan later denied to have signed any, such documents.



Three prominent leaders of Azad Kashmir Movement Sardar Abrahim, Sardar Qayum and Ch. Ghulam Abass. Courtesy http://www.flickr.com/photos/imharis/

But what went wrong that the honeymoon of this marriage between the Kashmiri parties sharing ideologies with the Indian and Pakistani ruling parties which was presented as a 'love marriage' was turned into ' domestic violence' within five

years? Sheikh Abdullah the acclaimed friend of Nehru was deposed and imprisoned in 1953. Indeed Nehru branded him as mentally disturbed because he was working for an independent Kashmir. Sheikh's counterpart across the line that divided Kashmir Sardar Ibrahim Khan was also thrown out of the 'presidency' in the same year.

The Times of India

NO. 821. VOL. CLV. BOMBAY: MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 1963 2½ ANNAS

SHEIKH ABDULLAH ARRESTED

CHARGES OF CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed Sworn In As Prime Minister

POLICE OPEN FIRE ON VIOLENT DEMONSTRATORS

SOBER SATISFACTION IN DELHI

"Timely Action By The Sadar-i-Riyasat"

Grave Threat To Freedom

PREMIER'S CALL

Kashmir Faces Crisis

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That is where the origins of present day uprising in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and the rise of over a dozen pro-independence political organizations in the Pakistani Occupied Kashmir (POK), hence of the current Kashmir problem can be traced. If the problem had been of secularism and Kashmiri people led by, Sheikh Abdullah wishing to join secular India why then Nehru the champion of the Indian secular movement had to put his dear friend Abdullah behind bars? If it was a problem of Muslim majority state going to Pakistan why then the Muslim brothers ruling Pakistan needed to grab the leader of Kashmir

Muslim Conference and send him to his home in Poonch, the home of revolt for Pakistan against Maharaja just six years back?

Well the answer is simple. The contradiction between Kashmir and the Indian or Pakistani states, which has been expressed repeatedly in the demand for plebiscite and self-determination, was never and is not in the secular or religious rhetoric. It always was, and remains, in the democratic will of Kashmiri peoples for distinct identity and national independence and its suppression by the Indian and Pakistani states. The history of Kashmir since its division in 1947 clearly backs this argument.

Background Context

As alluded above the division of Kashmir seemed perfect as for as the ideological proximity of Kashmiri political parties with either of the political forces in the British India was concerned. It did provide an opportunity for both Indian and Pakistani rulers to incorporate Kashmiris in the federal structures of the newly formed 'nation states'.

For Kashmiris although willing strongly for self-government, did not put up any significantly organised fight against the Indian army in the Indian occupied areas or against Pakistani army in the Pakistani occupied areas. National Conference

with its stronghold in IOK and Muslim Conference in POK convinced people that the armed involvement of the Indian and Pakistani states has made the goal of independence an unachievable one. Indeed the struggle that gave birth to these two mass political parties in Kashmir seemed concluded. They accepted the division with each ruling a part of Kashmir autonomously. However, as the events immediately after this apparently permanent division of Kashmir demonstrated, this was not a solution the rulers of India and Pakistan had in mind. As mentioned above the initial recognition of autonomous Kashmiri governments across the cease-fire line soon proved a transient gesture.

The rulers of both India and Pakistan wanted to take it all in order to satisfy their mighty egos rooted in the lust for plunder and coated in their narrow nationalist and communalist rivalry. The Indian National Congress and Pakistan Muslim League, which millions cheered as 'liberators' from the British colonialism and many welcomed them into Kashmir, soon began to behave like 'colonial forces' as for as the peoples of Kashmir and their right to independence was concerned. What unfolded on both sides of the divided Kashmir is the story needs to be comprehended by all with a slightest interest in a just resolution of Kashmir

question and bringing peace in the land where heaven meets earth.

Dismissal of the 'heads' of Kashmiri governments by the Indian and Pakistani rulers previously claiming as 'their own' in the IOK and POK was the first major problem to emerge in a relationship otherwise claimed as based on ideological love and solidarity. Ousted Kashmiri leaders on both sides did not take it lying down. Both Sheikh Abdullah and Sardar Ibrahim fought back and people backed them. The resistance was brutally crushed using the very armies, which only five years ego entered Kashmir as saviours. This episode featured by months of clashes between Kashmiri protesting against the actions of Delhi and Karachi generated the earliest waves of public resentment against the new set up. The National and Muslim Conferences, which in their respective strongholds cheered the armies of India and Pakistan as protectors and liberators, now vigorously attacked them as butchers and occupiers. The flame of independence considered dead and buried was rekindled.

However, for a number of reasons, National Conference and Muslim Conference were no longer in a position to take the fight for independence further in a new environment. Firstly, Indian and Pakistani military and political forces converted them from instruments of liberation into the tools

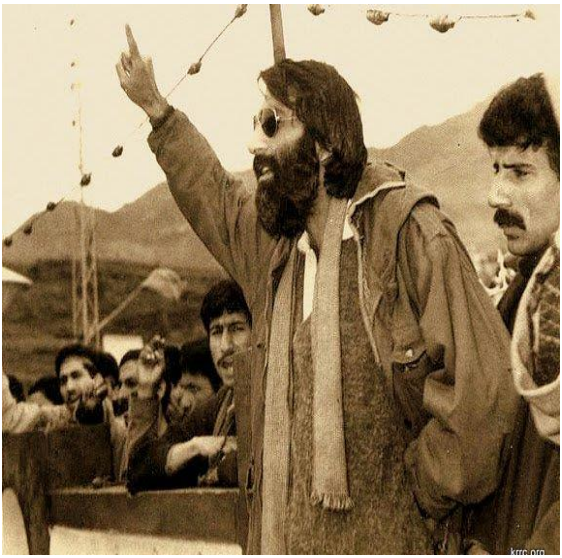
of ruling. They wanted to rule the respective parts of Kashmir with least intervention in the internal affairs from their Indian and Pakistani masters.

Secondly, there was no shortage of cadres from their own ranks and files ready to replace them regardless of the conditions Delhi and Karachi wanted to impose. Thirdly, Kashmir was now divided and people who fought bravely against Maharaja System for over three decades although unhappy with the situation were not in a position to fight Indian or Pakistani armies. The fall of Maharaja System certainly opened up some avenues for new freedoms and opportunities to get on with their lives and not to indulge into the fights, which they viewed as, power struggle (commonly described as Kursi ki larahee, the war for chair) between Kashmiris and non-Kashmiri politicians. In other words the Kashmiri generation grown up fighting Maharaja system rightly sensed that political struggle in Kashmir has been emptied of the radical and revolutionary credentials and has become a game of power hungry politicians.

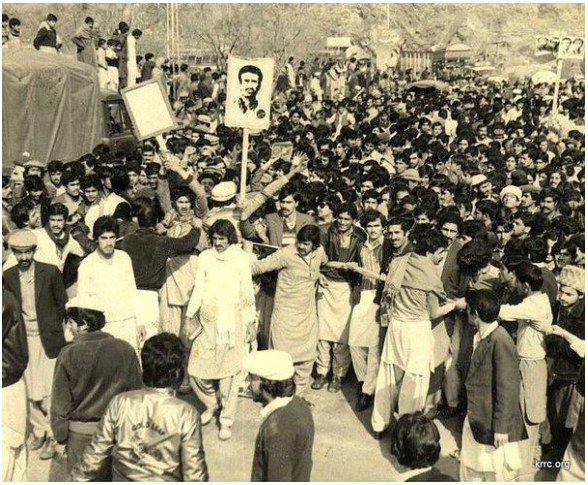
This belief of people was reinforced further when leaders such as Sheikh Abdullah and Sardar Ibrahim later joined by the Bakhshis in IOK and Qayuums in POK, became habitual of using the slogan of freedom merely to deceive Kashmiris in order to blackmail their Indian and Pakistani

masters. Various attempts by the leaders of the Muslim Conference in POK and the formation of Plebiscite Front by Sheikh Abdullah in IOK clearly reflected this new methodology adopted by this breed of Kashmiri politicians. They wanted to capitalize the influence they earned earlier during the fight against Maharaja System but not to achieve the goal they abandoned – the independence of Kashmir but to stay in power.

The goal of independence was to be strove for by the new generation of Kashmiris. Aware of the pre division struggle of their parents but not comfortable with its outcome, this generation initially was a minority on the both sides of the divided Kashmir. The resentment that agitated this generation of Kashmiris was generated by the derogatory and discriminatory treatment they received from the Indians and Pakistani rulers. The reasons for this were then explored and explained in the unequal economic and political relationship of Kashmir with India and Pakistan. A new consciousness emerged laying the basis for the modern national liberation struggle. Maqbool Bhat emerged as one of the most powerful leaders of this struggle.



Gul Nawaz Butt a highly respected leader of NSF died in 2005 Kashmir earthquake



Maqbool Bhatt:

An imprisoned martyr in the world's largest democracy

Written in 2005

Twenty-one years after his execution by the Indira Gandhi government to avenge the murder of an Indian diplomat in Birmingham by an unknown group 'Kashmir Liberation Army', Maqbool Bhatt is continuously imprisoned. The only other example of 'imprisonment after execution' comes to mind is that of legendary Bagat Singh and his comrades whose mortal remains were refused to their relatives by the British colonial rulers. While Kashmiris across the division, particularly in the Pakistani Occupied Kashmir (POK) and in several countries across the world where Kashmiris from POK are settled, commemorate the death anniversary of Maqbool Bhatt as their national hero, the demands for the release of his mortal remains from Tihaar were never formally made.

Last time I read anything about the grave of Maqbool Bhatt in Tihaar was written by Yasin Bhatt in early 1990s who wrote letters to Azmat Khan, formed general secretary JKLF Britain.

These letters were later published in the fortnightly 'Kashmir Times' published from Oldham. In these letters, Yasin glorifies the great martyr's grave. He wrote that the prisoners who knew Maqbool Bhatt revere him and decorate his grave every year on 11th February and pray for him according to their beliefs. For during his nine years at Tihaar he demonstrated through his behaviour that his is not a narrow nationalist or communal struggle but the struggle for the liberation of all peoples from slavery, exploitation, suppression, greed and ignorance, as he himself said before a Pakistani court where he was tried for masterminding Ganga Hi Jacking in 1970s.

He was charged as an Indian agent by the Pakistani and a Pakistani agent by the Indian rulers. He spent three years in Pakistani prisons and ten in the Indian. In his own words, he was an agent but only of Kashmiri peoples.

While Indian and Pakistani rulers, and those historians, intellectuals, academic and analysts who perhaps conveniently see Kashmir through the official lenses of the two occupying neighbours of Kashmir, completely ignore or pay little attention to the role of this pioneer of national liberation struggle in Kashmir, he is revered amongst the peoples of Kashmir and the progressive, aware and revolutionary quarters of India, Pakistan and world over as the Kashmiri

Baghat Singh, Great martyr, father of the nation and so on.

Childhood

Maqbool Bhatt was born to a peasant family in the village of Terehgam in Kupwara district in Baramulla constituency of the Kashmir Valley on 18th February 1938. It appears from the available information that his childhood was shaped by feudalism which at this point was fiercely challenged by the peasants, workers and middle classes across the Kashmir State. Along with other children of Terehgam Maqbool also confronte the 'rural lord' (feudal lord) at the age of eight[i]. He achieved his first victory against 'class divide' in junior school soon after the division of Kashmir in 1948. The occasion, according to Shoukat Maqbool, the younger son of Maqbool Bhatt, was annual awards ceremony at local village school where Maqbool Bhatt was amongst the high achievers. It was a norm on such occasions that children and parents of wealthy families sat in a row on one side of the hall and those from poor families on the other. During the ceremony when Maqbool was called over to the stage for his prize, he stunned everyone by refusing to take award until all the school children were brought to one side and parents to the other.

In the years to come Maqbool Bhatt was to take this fight for equality and justice out of his local school to the wider IOK society and then across the division line into Pakistani Occupied Kashmir. As a student at St Joseph College, he organised strings of demonstrations against the illegitimate removal from premiership chair and imprisonment of legendary Sheikh Abdullah by the Indian government of Juwar lal Nehru. Subsequently he went underground to escape crackdowns by the local police and secretly crossed over to 'Azad' Kashmir with his uncle.

After wondering around for a couple of years Maqbool Bhatt enrolled on post-graduation course in Urdu at Peshawar University (there was no University in 'Azad' Kashmir then) and also joined a local daily paper 'Injaam' (Conclusion or The End) as sub editor. At Peshawar, he had many progressive Pakistani students as his class and university fellows including Ahmed Fraaz, the living (died in 2008) legend of Urdu poetry. A few weeks ago on his visit to Bradford as the chief guest in a poetry reciting evening organised by local poets to celebrate the literary joint of Pakistan, Asad Zia, a British Kashmiri who was conducting the event requested Fraaz to talk about his time with Maqbool Bhatt at Peshawar. Coincidently the function was presided over by another Bhatt, Shoukat – the younger son of

Maqbool Bhatt. Ahmed Fraaz briefly recalled some of his memories that I noted down and are reproduced below:

"He was my class fellow. We were together. He was different from other students. He used to say that the spark that should be essential ingredient at this age is missing in the Pakistani youth. He often asked me to visit Kashmir with him. His was a very handsome personality. He had beard and beautiful hairs. He looked very much like Hazarat Isa (Jesus Christ). Girls adored his beard and we the boys were equally jealous of it. On one occasion, a disagreement arisen between us on the wordings of a (shehher) couplet. After some arguments, I said if I proved wrong, I will grow beard and if you did, you will have to shave yours. After consulting the original source, it was concluded that Maqbool was wrong. In the evening, when we got together in our usual café for tea, we reminded Maqbool of the bet. He said yes let us go to the barber. We went to the barbershop nearby and Maqbool told the barber to shave off his beard. Barber who knew us well said you are joking. Maqbool said no I am serious shave it off. We also tried to stop him but he said no I have to fulfil my undertaking. Such true to his words was he. I am not sure if I could have grown beard had I lost the bet. However, he was such an honest person. Without beard, he looked completely different person. He looked strange. I always

regretted this. After completion, education we all went joined different careers. I joined lectureship and he became news editor. We continued meeting in the evenings. He was a beautiful man both from out and within. His sacrifice as no parallels."

In POK and Pakistan

He participated in the local 'democracies' elections in 'Azad' Kashmir under Ayub Khan's Martial Law and offered his services to Pakistan Army in 1965. However, the Tashqand agreement between India and Pakistan where Kashmir was pushed on the back burner disappointed Maqbool Bhatt like thousands of other Kashmiris. He became connected with a small network of middle class Kashmiri pro-independence activists consisting of migrants from Valley, Jammu, 'Azad' Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan in Plebiscite Front. In PF Maqbool Bhatt along with Amanullh Khan initiated debates on national liberation struggle on the lines of Algeria. Subsequently NLF was formed on 13th August 1965. In June 1966, Maqbool Bhatt along with Aurangzeb originally from Gilgit and Subedar Kala Khan from Muzaffarabad crossed back to IOK and during three months stay they recruited several Kashmiris to NLF in various towns across the Valley including Srinagar, Sopur, Baramulla, Bandipuro and Annant Nag or Islamabad. On their way, back to 'Azad' Kashmir they were intercepted by the Indian security patrol and the shootout that

followed left NLF member Aurangzeb and Security inspector Amarchand dead. Maqbool Bhatt and Kala Khan were arrested. Interestingly two FIRs were registered against Maqbool Bhatt with different charges. In one numbered 38 of 1966 at Sopore police station Mqbool Bhatt was accused of "illegally crossing the ceasefire line" with a " criminal conspiracy to overthrow a lawfully established government". In the other, also numbered 38 of 1966 at Panzulla police station he was charged for killing a CID inspector Amar Chand. While the defence pleaded that Amarchand was killed in a cross fire between inspector and Aurangzeb, the special court found Maqbool Bhatt guilty and sentenced him to death. However, after about two years in prison Maqbool Bhatt in a dramatic move escaped from Srinagar prison through a tunnel they secretly dug in for months along with two other prisoners, Amir Ahmed and Choudhary Yasin. After hiding in and walking through the forests and over the snow covered hills and mountains for sixteen days they managed to cross back to 'Azad' Kashmir. Here they were arrested by Pakistan army and were released after three months of interrogation only after consistent protests by pro-independence groups including National Students Federation (NSF), PF and NLF. The events between 1966 and 1968 had profound impact on the younger generation of Kashmiris across the division line and made Maqbool Bhatt a

popular leader of the national liberation movement. His pictures started appearing on the walls across 'Azad' Kashmir with the following couplets by Nazir Anjum, one of the founders of NSF, later a college lecturer who was also later arrested and kept in Dulahee camp, a notorious prison on the shores of Neelam near Pakistan's border with Kashmir.

Kitna piyara nahara hey azadi ke matwaloon ka
Kashmir ka zarra zarra hey Kashmir ke rehney waloon ka
How lovely is the slogan of freedom lovers
Every inch of Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris

And

Zulam ko Aman Adawat ko wafa kehtey hein
Kitney nadan hein sar sar ko sabha kehtey hein
Mere Kashmir zara jag keh kuch jaha tallab
Gheir ko tere muqadar ka khuda kehtey hein

They call oppression the peace and resentment the loyalty
How naive are they who call mere hissing sounds as morning breeze
Wake up O My Kashmir! as some status hungry amongst us
Say that the occupiers are the masters of your destiny

Rise to Leadership

By 1970s, the politics of independence grew into a significant force in 'Azad' Kashmir. In 1970, Maqbool Bhatt led a weeklong activity as part of the 'Gilgit Baltistan Awareness Week' including a visit to these areas of the Kashmir State directly controlled by Pakistan without even basic democratic and civil rights. Pakistani authorities reacted quickly and forced Maqbool Bhatt and his comrades including Amanullah Khan (JKLF fame) and Abdul Khaliq Ansari (PF founder) out of the birthplace of Amanullah Khan.

In 1971, another unprecedented event took place in Kashmir. Two Kashmiris Hashim Qureshi and Ashraf Qureshi hijacked an Indian Fokker 'Ganga' and brought it to Lahore. The incident forced the whole world to stop for a moment and look towards Kashmir, a forgotten legacy of colonial blunders and disregard for the people rights. Hijacking was a widely used tactic amongst the national liberation movements in 1960s to highlight the plight of subjugated and enslaved peoples and nations. The incident stunned all of the Kashmiri leaders especially on the Pakistani occupied side of Kashmir. Sardar Abdul Qayuum who at that time had formed a militant group 'Al Mujahid' according to hijackers, came to see them and made attractive offers if they announce him as the mastermind of hijacking. However, the

Quershis refused to put themselves for sale and revealed that they are NLF members and their leader is Maqbool Bhatt. With many twists and turns Maqbool Bhatt along with Hashim, Ashraf, GM Mir, GM Lone and scores of other NLF activists and pro-independence Kashmiris were rounded up and bundled away to various Pakistani prisons. (For the details on Ganga Hijacking and the court case that followed see Maqbool Bhatt's court statement and letter from Camp prison Lahore to Azra Mir).

In 1970s Pakistan saw its first elected government but in the process lost its Eastern wing.

The change of 'Ceasefire Line' (CfL) into 'Line of Control' (LoC) by Indira and Bhutto at Shimla and subsequent launch of Pakistan People's Party in 'Azad' Kashmir followed by a visit to Mirpur to declare 'Azad' Kashmir as fifth province of Pakistan indicates that he agreed with his Indian counterpart on division as the solution of Kashmir. National consensus on any particular solution for Kashmir has not been a particular strength of Kashmiri politics, but one thing they always agreed, and agree on, is that the State must not be divided. Therefore, Bhutto's province move was met with overwhelming rejection. The pro accession Muslim Conference stood side by side with the pro-independence Kashmiris to oppose the move.

Crossing Back to IOK

1976 Maqbool Bhatt once again crossed back to the Indian occupied Kashmir despite the death sentence hanging on him. His move has been criticised by Amanulah Khan and many other pro-independence Kashmiris as suicidal. However, it seems that Maqbool Bhatt in his analysis of the situation was convinced beyond any doubt that underground work in IOK was imperative for the development of NLF and that perhaps he was the most qualified amongst the NLF leadership to build on what was initiated during his previous trip in 1966. Within weeks of his entrance to IOK, the security agencies there became aware of Maqbool Bhatt's move and arrested him. His death sentence was revoked and he spent next ten years in various Kashmiri and Indian prisons with most of the time in Tihar prison Delhi.

Blunder in Birmingham

In the first week of February 1984, a diplomat Rovindra Mahatre was kidnapped from the Indian consulate Birmingham by an unknown group 'Kashmir Liberation Army'. The demands by KLA also included the release of Maqbool Bhatt who was at this point waiting optimistically for

response to his legal team's application for judicial review of his case. However, within a space of two days Mahatre was found dead and on 11th February 1984 at 7.00am Kalu, the hangman at Tihar pulled the lever and hooded in black, the Terehgam boy who lied down before the motorcade of village feudal lord to win concessions for the village and the school boy who revolutionised the class divide in his junior school – the Christ look alike, dropped down and within minutes was declared dead by the prison doctor.

Death of a leader, birth of a martyr

At Srinagar airport local police refused Mehmooda, Maqbool Bhatt's sister and other family members from getting on to the Delhi flight for the last meeting with their rebel boy and forced them to go back to Terehgam. In City Abdul Ghani Lone, Azam Inqlabi and several other Kashmiris brought out processions to protest the hanging of Maqbool Bhatt. In Peshawar his sons Shoukat, Javed daughter Lubna and wife Zakira sat in disbelief for hours.

In London where many JKLF activists were taken in on the suspicion of being behind the kidnapping found accusing each other as responsible for the hanging of their leader. Over ten thousand Kashmiris from across Britain went down to Hide Park London in one of the biggest demonstrations

of Kashmiris in Britain. In Mirpur, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Rawalakot and other towns across 'Azad' Kashmir angry crowds of Kashmiri youth were expressing their feelings by indulging in various activities at random from shouting slogans to burning Indian and Pakistani flags to clashing with police and making public speeches against the Indian government of Indira Gandhi. I was at Karachi University and before this day never ever participated in any political activity apart from a *jalsa* (public meeting) of Muslim Conference head Sardar Qayuum atmy bith town Akalgarh when we were loaded in a bus from school and brought to the *Jalsa.* Coming from a Muslim Conference family I strongly opposed the independence ideology and politics. But such compelling were the emotions amongst Kashmiri students in Karachi University that I do not know any student of Kashmiri background regardless of political affiliations who did not go to that protest outside of the Indian embassy in Karachi.

Maqbool Bhatt Lives on

It is widely believed amongst pro-independence Kashmiris across the globe that last words of Maqbool Bhatt were 'My Kashmir the day of your freedom WILL come'. What is the source of this saying is not known. However, he is on record

saying: *if Indian rulers think that by hanging me they will be able to crush the national liberation aspirations and struggle in Kashmir, they are wrong. For in fact the movement will start after my execution*. How right he was.

At Tihar according to Yasin Bhatt who spent there a decade as political prisoner and collected wealth of information from prison staff and inmates about Maqbool Bhatt, the horrified eyes of prisoners were watching through their cells and the lower rank staff for whose employment rights and working conditions Maqbool Bhatt fought many successful legal battles, were silently moving about to do their tasks. The body was brought out of the execution spot and silently buried in the prison courtyard where it remains till this day. In fact Maqbool Bhatt has literally been kept prisoner even twenty one (now twenty nine) years after the execution.

Yasin Bhatt, who has recently been released, wrote from Tihar prison in 1990s, that the prisoners have since turned the grave of Maqbool Bhatt into that of a saint. Every year on 11th February prisoners of all faiths and backgrounds from across India and Kashmir clean the grave. They spray it with whatever fragrance available to them, light candles and pray for the legend of modern Kashmir history according to their own faiths. This they do because during his time at Tihar Maqbool Bhatt made it his business to fight for the rights of

prisoners. It is said that he initiated and led a successful campaign for the right to leave and uniforms for the lower rank prison staff.

Maqbool Bhatt must have written about his life and struggle during his long time in Tihar but as niece Mobina told to rediff.com reporter on his visit to Terehgam four years ago, nothing of his possessions has been returned to his family as yet. From his statement before Lahore High Court and his letters from prison recently compiled by Saeed Asad in 'Azad' Kashmir (this book called Shaoor e Farda; a vision of tomorrow is banned in this 'Azad' Kashmir) he appears a very well read revolutionary whose analysis of national liberation struggle in Kashmir but also of other South Asian nations and those of world would prove a great addition into the modern literature on nationalism and neo-colonialism in South Asia. While the Indian official sources would like the world to believe that Maqbool Bhatt was nothing but a murderer who was hanged according to law of the land for his crime, the one big question Indian rulers have to answer sooner or later is why then was he buried in prison? Is this the law of the land of the largest democracy on earth? Why is he in prison twenty one years after his execution? Is this legal in the country created through the national liberation struggle led by such leaders as Subash Chandar Bose, Gandhi and Nehru and that is now

making its way to sit on the UN security council seat as permanent member?

Twenty one (twenty nine) years on Maqbool Bhatt has grown into an undisputed national hero certainly for the pro-independence Kashmiris across the division line and amongst the Kashmiri Diaspora scattered across the world. Indeed he is the only symbol of the pro-independence politics that brings together Kashmiris from various political, religious and party political backgrounds. For Maqbool Bhatt the old saying fits perfectly well that revolutionary may die but never the revolution. Maqbool Bhatt lives on in the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris across globe. Every year on 11th Feberuary his anniversary is commemorated in USA, UK, Europe, IOK, POK and in Pakistan by Kashmiris. Now the demand for the release of his body is eventually taken up by the Kashmiris of all political persuasions. Whether the authorities at Delhi meet the demand or continue ignoring it, in an environment where the governments of India and Pakistan appear moving away from war to words, the pro-independence politics that experienced suppression from both of the occupying state seems set to rise as the way forward for the pro unification and independence Kashmiris. That is what Maqbool Bhatt perhaps meant when he said before a Pakistani court:

"I am an agent of Kashmiri people and to them I leave the decision about my role in the struggle for independence."

Britain, Kashmir and British Kashmiris

National census is accepted as the most authentic source of statistical information about the population of a country. However, it is not possible to trace accurate figures of Kashmiris in Britain as they are not recognised in the British ethnic monitoring system including census as a distinct ethnic category. Instead they are countd as Pakistanis if originating from the Pakistani occupied 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K) and Indian if originate from the Indian occupied 'Jammu and Kashmir' (J&K). Therefore, we have to rely on academic estimates. The most common and frequently quoted estimate is offered by Rager Ballard who estimates that at least two third of British Pakistani are actually from 'Azad' Kashmir. Based on that the current population of British Kashmiris is between 700,000 to one million.

Of these over three hundred families are from the Valley of Kashmir – Kasheer and the rest originate from 'Azad' Kashmir. Here too the centre of labour migration to UK from its beginning in 19th century has been the Mirpur district which is now one of

the three divisions of 'Azad' Kashmir. Other two are Poonch and Muzafarabad.

In the period before the division of Kashmir in 1947, the migration from Mirpur almost exclusively consisted of the peasants and artisans. This fact combined with the subsequent invasion, division and occupation of the State meant that Kashmiris started their lives in Britain at very bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

For several decades they not only remained an invisible community in terms of their 'background' national identity but also experienced double marginalisation and exclusion in the wider British society as well as within the British South Asians. However, with fourth generation growing up in Britain, the state and status of British Kashmiris appears to be changing. Ironically most of the recognition of Kashmiri presence in Britain carries negative percetions especially in relation to such issues as Forced Marriages, segregation, Extremism and Sex Grooming etc.

This section tells briefly the story of earliest links between British and Kashmir and the arrival of the earliest Kashmiris in Britain.

'We are here because you were there', is the slogan of anti-racist movement in Britain. It reflects the history that migration from ex colonies to UK has

taken place because these countries were colonised by British.

British in Kashmir

The very first link between Britain and Kashmir was the Kashmiri Shawl, a product of the Kashmiri (Ladakhi and Kashiri) climate, labour and skills. This unique garment came to UK within few decades of the East India Company off shoring to India. British women loved this soft and delicate garment that soon became a status symbol for the middle and upper class ladies in London and across UK (Maskiell, M. 2002).

The earliest ventures of British to Kashmir, according to Bamzai (1967) were driven by political and commercial interests. The first British in what today is known as Kashmir state was Mr. Bogle who was sent to Tibet by Warne Hasting, first Governor General of India in 1774 to explore political and commercial relations between Kashmir Valley and Tibet. A few years later in 1783 Gorge Forster, an officer of Bangla Army entered Kashmir on his way to St. Petersburg Russia. His observations of Jammu provide interesting insight into policies and practices of coexistence or 'diversity and multiculturalism' by the then Jammu ruler Raja Ranjit Dev (1750-1771).

"Runzeid Dev, the father of the present chief of Jumbo, who deservedly acquired the character of a just and wise ruler, largely contributed to the wealth of and importance of Jumbo. Perceiving the benefits that would arise from the residence of Muhammadan merchants, he held out to them many encouragements and observed towards them a disinterested (sic) and honourable conduct. He avowedly protected and indulged his people, particularly the Muhammadans, to whom he allotted a certain quarter of the town which was thence denominated Mughalpur; a mosque was erected in the new colony. When he was riding through their quarter during the time of prayer, he never failed to stop his horse until the priest (Moazan) had concluded his ritual exclamation [Azaan]. An administration so munificent and judicious at the same time that it enforces the respect of the subjects, made Jumbo a place of extensive commercial resort, where all descriptions of men experienced, in their persons and property, a full security" (p:589)

Then we learn of Vigne who visited Kashmir in 1835 and produced a detailed account of the Shawl industry. Follwing the first Anglo-Sikh war,

when Punjabi Sikh rulers could not pay the indemnity money, the British took over the control of Kashmir Valley that was at that time under the Sikh rule. However, instead of annexing it in the British India they transferred it 'forever in independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heir's male of his body, all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Ravi.' This treaty was signed on 16th March 1846 and Maharaja Gulab Singh was to pay the indemnity money of 7.5 million rather the full amount of 15 million Punjab Durbar owed to the British East India Company.

Subsequently, the interaction between what became 'The British India' and 'The Princely India' of which Kashmir was part increased and several studies were carried out of the geography, economy, politics, cultures and ethnic composition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir by several British military and civil officers. Fredrick Dew, Walter Lawrence and Alexander Cunningham are some of the most known and frequently quoted ones.

The First Kashmiri in Britain

Other regular British visitors to Kashmir were the military officers and civil servants who either did not want or could not afford trips back home

during summer holidays. For such officers Kashmir became an ideal place to escape the scorching heat of Indian plains during summer. Tosha Maidan near Srinagar was one of the popular summer resorts that attracted large numbers of tourists mainly from British India. According to Yousaf Saraf (1977) in the summer of 1833 one colonial army officer Colonel Thorpe came here on holidays. While socialising with the local elites he caught sight of a girl and the sight turned into love – the love at first sight. According to Saraf she was daughter of Dayim Rathore, the then ruler of Kishtawar principality. All we know about this 'Daughter of Kishtwar' is that her name was 'Jani', and she was exceptionally beautiful and Col. Thorpe fell in love with her at first sight and could not leave Kashmir without her. He was told that the only way to marry Jani was to become Muslim. He converted to Islam and brought Jani with him first to India and then to his home, Britain in 1830s. So the first ever known Kashmiri to Britain was Jani of Kishtawar. Nothing specific is told about the arrival of the first 'British Kashmiri' couple to Britain or their life as to where they lived and what the three children they had were called etc.

However, it can be traced from the available information that the story of this 'transnational', British Kashmiri marriage did not end here but

took a rather dramatic turn when one of their sons Robert Thorpe Junior also joined army and went to visit what was literally his 'motherland' or, at least, 'mother's land', in 1860s.

By now Kashmir was turned into a Kingdom through Amritsar. At the time of Thorpe's visit to Kashmir the state was ruled by Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the son of Gulab Singh. While in Kashmir Lt. Robert Thorpe, like his father, also became deeply involved. However, his involvement was not with the beauty but misery of Kashmir. During his stay in Kashmir, he travelled around in the state and collected significant primary and secondary data (first and second hand information) on taxation, shawl industry, judiciary and police systems and the execution of various laws and policies. He wrote several articles accusing British government of selling Kashmir's Muslim majority population to a Hindu ruler whose rule he claimed was characterised by suppression and exploitation. He argued for Kashmir state to be merged with British India. His articles were published in Britain as well as in Indian press and as can be expected were not appreciated by the people in power.

According to father Biscoe who visited Kashmir in 1890, trouble came to Thorpe who was ordered by the Maharaja Government to leave Kashmir and on refusal was bounded with his *Kahatt* (bed) and

soldiers carried him out of the Kashmir boundaries. He sneaked back to Srinagar but to no avail as next morning, he was found dead after his breakfast.

However the story told by Zaheer-Ud-Din (2011) informs that the Jani was actually Jana and was from Sugen Yarinar village in Budgam district. According to Din, Thorp's father E-Thorpe visited Jana's village often and on one of his visits he saw Jana and fell in love with her. Din does not tell why E- Thorpe visited Jana's village? According to this version Jana was not a daughter of any Royal Dahim Rathore but a buffalo herder from a Teli (oil pressors) family and when colonel fell in love he confided to Habibullah Teli, an uncle of Jana who was in army and made all the rrangements for marriage.

The rest of the story is similar to the one told by Saraf and father Biscoe. Another additional information Din offers which can perhaps leads to the reason for the deportation of Thorpe is that foreigners were allowed to stay in Kashmir for maximum two months and Thorpe stayed longer to study the appalling conditions of people in the birthplace of his mother.

He was found dead on the next morning on the Suleman Taing Hill after him sneaking back to

Kashmir on 21st November[113] 1868. Was this a murder? Saraf, Y, and Din, Z claim he was poisoned whereas Zahid, T claims that he was strangulated.

He is buried in the British cemetery at Sheikh Bagh Srinagar. The epitaph on his neglected grave without any cross in this Christian cemetery reads "Obit (Obituary) - Robert Thorp- Veritas (means truth in Latin) - He gave his life for Kashmir."

His articles were published after his death under the title of 'Cashmere Misgovernment' by Longmans, Green and Company, London in 1870. The book that can possibly be described as the first social study of Kashmir provides useful information on the taxation system, shawl industry, beggar (forced unpaid labour), the 1846 treaty between Gulab Singh and British government and migration of shawl workers from the Kashmir Valley. Many of these shawl workers' families settled in Mirpur from where along with Mirpuri peasant and workers they were to migrate to Britain in the closing years of 19th and early years of 20th century[114].

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[113] Saraf writes 22nd November

[114] For details see http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2008/Mar/6/kashmiris-forget-robert-thorpe-his-grave-46.asp and

A close reading of the Thorp's writing would show racial and communal conotations that chracterisied the British colonial discourse. For example his main criticism of British is that instead of taking Kashmir over they handed this 'Mulsim majority' state to a 'Hindu ruler' who could not govern it because of being an 'Asiatic'.

Another mention of a British-Kashmiri marriage appeared in the history of Asian migration to Britian by Rozina Visram titled 'Asians in Britain' (2002). Identifying various museums with collections from South Asia during the colonial rule she mentions of Newbridge House Museum, County Dublin in Ireland where belongings of Thomas Alexander Cobb (1788-1836) are kept 'who married to Nazir Begum, the daughter of Aziz Jehan of Kashmir' (p:5). Were there more transnational and cross religion marriages taking place between Kashmiris and British? This needs further exploration.

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http://www.risingkashmir.com/news/forgotten-saviour-18432.aspx

A Love Trap in London
blackmail of the century

Eighty six years after that instant love affair blossomed at Toshamaidan in Kashmir between the Kishtawari royal beauty "Jani and British Colonel Thorpe leading to the first British Kashmiri transnational marriage (above), an innocent member of Kashmiri royalty fell in love at first sight with a British girl but with quite different consequences[115].

It was in the summer of 1919 that Raja Sir Hari Singh, the crown prince of a Kashmir Kingdom arrived at London with his secretary Mr Mehboob[116] as the honoured guest of the British government. The Kashmiri Maharaja, to be, was kept in a house at *Curzon Street*, Mayfair, where he enjoyed all that London society had to offer. One Captain Charles Arthur was designated to the

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115 The story is referred to briefly by Lord Birdwood and Youssef Saraf in the "Two Nation Theory and Kashmir" and 'Kashmiris Fight for Freedom". However, it is reproduced here with reference to an article by Anne de Courcy in the Daily Mail, a British tabloid, on January 10, 2002.

116 That is all Courcy gives for his name and describes Mehboob as Hari Singh's cousin that of course is highly unlikely as Maharja Hari Singh did not have any Muslim cousins.

Prince as ADC[117]. On November 11th 1919 Sir Hari Singh and Mehboob went to a "grand Victory Ball at the Albert Hall to celebrate the anniversary of Armistice[118].

Last Maharaja of Kashmir Sri Hari Singh (1895-1961)

Present in the party at Albert Hall were two beauties Maudie Robinson and Lilian Bevan. Maudie was a "petite, shapely blond divorcee who, at 18, had been briefly married to Charles

[117] Also known as chief of staff, personal assistant or secretary.
[118] To remember the 11th November 1918, the day when fighting ended in the First World War. Since 1946 it is celebrated as Remembrance Sunday.

Robinson, a bookmaker and gambler. Lilian was a young widow and Maudie's flatmate at Knightsbridge. The two single blonds made partying, dining, dancing and flirting their way of keeping up with the high life.

Their meeting with handsome Kashmiri men seemed like a Holly or Bollywood plot. In the Albert Hall Maudie and Lilian found they were seated with Sir Hari Singh's ADC Captain Arthur and secretary Mehboob. In Courcy's words "Maudie was enchanted by Maboob's stories of Kashmir and, as she listened raptly, Captain Arthur suggested a meeting with Sir Hari the following day. When they met Sir Hari fell so much in love with Maudie that "when Maudie danced with another man, he wept'. The relationship went on and Maudie became a regular visitor at Sir Hari's House in *Curzon Street.*

In the same street lived Mr Noel Newton, a forger and conman well known to Scotland Yard and coincidently was an acquaintance of Maudies estranged husband Charlie Robinson. Not only that, he had once been Maudie s lover.

Noticing Maoudie's frequent visits to Prince Hari Singh, Newton instantly spotted the potential for blackmail and thus was conceived one of the most audacious blackmail plots of the 20th century. To work this out he needed Captain's help who he found was readily willing to betray the trusting prince. The plan was to catch Prince with Maudie in bed and then demand huge amounts of money to keep the secret. The blackmailers worked out

that the prince would rather pay than face disinheritance by his strictly religious and conservative uncle Maharaja Paratab Singh for bringing family and kingdom into disrepute.

Unaware of what was cooking around him Prince Hari Singh, Mehboob, Captain Arthur, Maudie and Lilian went to Paris for Christmas. After having great fun for a couple of days, the drama reached its climax on the "morning after boxing day of 1919".

While Hari Singh and Maudie were lying side by side in bed in their ground floor suite with its door "happened to be unlocked", Maudie's ex-husband Charlie Robinson bursted in and shouted to his ex "I have got you at last!. Then he turned to the handsome prince and said "as for you, sir, you will hear more about this!

As writes Courcy, "To Maudie, this was a jealous ex-lover catching her out and threatening vengeance. But the prince assumed that this furious stranger must be Maudie's husband and turned to the only man he could trust or so he thought, his ADC. Scaring the prince of consequences of any publicity Arthur suggested that they should buy the intruder off. Subsequently, the prince wrote two cheques for £150,000 each (equivalent to £3.3m today).

Within days prince Hari Singh left for Kashmir with bitter memories of his love life but pleased that it all had a happy ending. But for the cons of the then London high society, the story took

another nasty twist. While the cheques were made out to Maudie's ex-husband Charles Robinson they were cashed by someone else using forged signatures. Robinson was convinced by a fake solicitor to accept £25,000 for his wife "having gone wrong with a black man in Paris". But after four years when Captain Arthur wrote to Robinson revealing the plot, Robinson took his bank to court for paying out money from his account to someone else. It was here in open court that the blackmail plot was exposed. Did Neol Newton, the father of this complicated blackmail plot get any share? Who cashed Cheques? We do not know. In court Sir Hari Singh was referred to as "Mr A to protect his privacy but according to Coercy "the secret of the Kashmiri Prince and the beautiful blonde quickly became the subject of salacious gossip throughout London society[119]. Commenting on the implications of this scandal for the political developments in Kashmir, she claims that "an attempt was made to install a cousin on the throne. Implying that this cousin was the same "Maboob who accompanied Sir Hari Singh to London, she claims that had the cousin been installed "Kashmir might now belong to Pakistan, and there would be no threat of nuclear war

[119] During the First World War prince Hari Singh, according to Bamzai, was the commander-in-chief of the State forces and was responsible for training State army units which were sent to the Front. "He made a 'personal' donation of Rs. 4.3 million to the War Fund. But all these services to the British, writes Bamzai, did not save him from becoming the victim of an unscrupulous attempt at blackmail in a big way, and for a few days in 1921 the case of Mar. A was to monopolize the headlines of various British newspapers.

today". However, we know that the Crown Prince Hari Singh was coronated to Kashmir Crown in 1924. It is also a well-established fact that Kashmir problem does not exist because Maharaja could not made up his mind on accession to India or Pakistan, but because of his inclination towards independence which was over ruled by the British and subsequently crushed by the Pakistani and Indian armies still under the British Command. But that is another story for another day.

The Labour migration from Mirpur and making of a British Kashmiri Diaspora Community

British Kashmiris are described here as those citizens/residents of Britain who or their parents originated from the Kashmir State and have and/or are entitled to the 'State Subject', the citizenship of Kashmir state.

What has become known as the British Kashmiri Diaspora is an outcome of the migration that began towards the closing years of the 19th century. According to Roger Ballard, who has done extensive work on the migration and settlement of Kashmiris from Mirpur to Britain, the pioneers of Kashmiri labour migration to Britain were the peasants and workers from Dadyal and surrounding villages.

Before 1846, when the British took over Punjab and 'sold' Kashmir to Maharja Gulab Singh who

formed the present day state of Jammu Kashmir, , Mirpur formed part of Jammu. The land and water were the two primary sources of earning liovlihood here. Land was cultivated to produce variety of grains; the water was a source of fishery, transport and travel. According to Ballard the pleatu where Mangla Dam was to be built a century later, was the spot for a boatbuilding workshop. The boats were built here and sold to the traders and merchants from Punjab, mainly Jhelum for their river trade and transportation to Lahore and beyond upto Lahori Bandhar in Sindh.

However, in 1860s, the empire came up with some radical developments in technology that caused sweeping changes in the lives and work of milliosn of the workers across the world. One development relevant to us here was the introduction of train in British India. Being part of Princely India Mirpur was on the border of Punjab that is why the train track was stopped on the Punjab side of the river Jhelum and did not come to Mirpur. Since the transportation by train was safer, faster and perhaps cheaper it caused the demise of travel, trade and transportation by river and related boat building 'industry'. A large number of workers in Mirpur became unemployed. However, some people spotted the opportunity in this 'crisis' and used the very train to venture on to Bombay, Calcuta and Karachi in search of work. It was the

same period when another technological development caused radical changes in the British Navy Merchat Ships. They were changed from sailing to steam. This change created jobs for boiler stokers which soon became the monopoly of Mirpuris through Sirangs, the engine-room labour foremen.

This was happening in 1870s and 1880s. It sems that by the end of that century some sirhangs and engine room workers/ stokers whose job was to put coal on the fire in the engine room in an average temperature of upto 70 degree centigrade, managed to find their way in the much cooler Britain. These were the pioneers of Kashmiri labour migration to Britain.[120]

Gradually the information about work in Bombay and in Britain was reached to surrounding villages of dadyal through friends and relations. More people from surrounding villages found their way to Britain.

World Wars – Fighting for the Empire?

Some Kashmiris who were serving in First World War in British army came to Britain after the war. My maternal grandfather Bava Ji Reham Ali served in the First World War. Some more came and

[120] For details read Roger Ballard http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/savifadok/255/1/mirpur.pdf

settled here after the Second World War. A large number of Kashmiris from different parts of the state fought alongside the British army. More than 50,000 troops were sent by the Maharaja of Kashmir to fight in the 2nd World War[121].

Some of the soldiers who were made prisoners of war by Germany and Japan also came to Britain after they were freed. My grandfather Bava Ji Sardar Khan who served in the Second World War as a Cook or *laangery* was one of such Kashmiris who spent 9 weeks in UK after being released from prison. According to his only daughter he was offered the choice to stay and work here but he decided not to stay because of the family in Kashmir and also because the 'country was very cold, dull and dark'. However, as the time revealed this was going to be the destination of almost all of his offspring.

The Cheap labour

The reason for the next phase of Kashmiri migration was to meet the labour shortage in the British industries. After the 2nd World War there were not enough workers in Britain to meet the need for reconstruction and other public and service industries. Also British workers were not willing to take up some harsh and dirty jobs. They were also by then more aware of their rights as

[121] Saraf, Y, (1976) Kashmiris Fight for Freedom.

workers and wanted high pays and better working conditions. All these reasons played role in British factory owners and industrialists to look outside of Britain for labour – actually cheap labour. Ex colonies – places under direct or indirect rule of Britain – were the obvious choice. At the same time ex soldiers or Ship workers or seamen who been to Britain had many stories about work for their friends and relatives back home. So there was interest on both sides.

Invasion and Division of Kashmir

Another major change that played a big role in uprooting people in Mirpur was the invasion of India and Pakistan in Kashmir and the forced division of Kashmir in October 1947. Thousands of people were made to leave their homes in Mirpur from where non Muslims were forced to leave and in Jammu where Muslims were forced to flee. The entire foundation of Mirpuri society was shaken and many who were uprooted migrated to Britain.

Chain Migration

Number of Kashmiris in Britain rose rapidly during 1950s when Kashmiris who were now working in UK started bringing in their relatives and friends to work in the mills, factories and foundries etc. By the end of 1957 it can be claimed that the process of Kashmiri migration to Britain

was developed into what social scientists call 'chain migration'.

The Mangla Dam

Sometimes the writers on 'Mirpuri' migration to Britain argue that Mangla Dam was the main cause of migration from Mirpur to Britain. There is also this myth that actually Mirpuris came to Britain as a compensation for the building of Mangla dam by Pakistan. However, as can be understood from above details, by 1960s many thousands of Kashmiris from Mirpur were present and working in Britain. The process of coming to Britain was turned into chain migration which means that Mangla Dam or no Mangla Dam, the relatives and friends of the workers in Britain were 'destined' to come to UK. However, the building of Mangla dam by the Pakistani Government and the announcement by the British Government of introducing new laws to control migration certainly accelerated the process of migration from Mirpur.

Families; *Baal Bacha* بال بچہ

The migration of Kashmiris took another turn in 1970s. Again mainly as a result of the changes in law, several Kashmiri men started bringing their wives and children over because now sons were allowed in only if accompanied by their mothers. Prior to the new laws majority of Kashmiri men were reluctant to bring in their families. They

thought they will go back soon so what is the point of bringing families over. However, with the change in law many decided to get visas for the wives and children just to be on safe side.

The arrival of wives and children left the grandparents – *bays and bavas* بے باوے – or *buzurags* بزرگ in a difficult position. In many families no one was left 'back home' to look after bays and bavas. That is how the grandparents started coming to UK after 1980s.

Marriages; *Shaadiyan* شادیاں

For centuries Shadi is preferred from within the family with first cousin as the first choice. With the arrival of children and wives or *Baal Bacha* of some of the brothers and sisters to Britain, the children of other brothers and sisters who left there were the first choice of marriage when they became of marriage age. That is how the migration of mangehters or fiancées to UK was started.

Where in Britain did they come?

The decision of where to settle has always been linked and dependent on the availability of the work.

Early Kashmiris seamen came to the coast towns of Britain. These Kashmiris mainly worked as vendors and peddlers around the coastal towns.

Those came after the division of Kashmir worked mainly in foundries, factories and mills. The majority settled in and around Bradford, Birmingham, London and Greater Manchester. Thos who had some education and could speak some English managed to find work in transport as bus conductors and later drivers and lived in and around Newcastle and Glasgow.

For many decades it was this labour work or semi-skilled jobs that remained the main occupation of (azad) Kashmiris in Britain. In other words for many decades Azad Kashmiris almost entirely form the working class. Ask your fathers and grandfathers and they will tell you that they worked very long hours and stayed in small houses in dozens. However, this gradually changed with the next generation gaining more access to wider corridors of British Public, Voluntary and Private sectors.

Kashmiri Identity in Britain

Full text of the talk given at the launch conference of Kashmir National Identity Campaign on 26th January 1999 at Kashmir Restaurant Bradford. The conference was chaired by Saeed Hussain of KWA who along with Mehmood Kashmiri of NLF was elected as the founding joint Chairperson of KNIC.

Friends, brothers, sisters and comrades Asalaam o Alycum and a very good afternoon!

My name is Shams Rehman. Originally I come from Mirpur district of Kashmir and now live in Oldham for last ten years. I am here today on behalf of the Kashmir National Identity Campaign (KNIC) to explain and discuss the nature and current rise of Kashmiri identity in Britain.

As you can imagine identity is a very complex, huge and puzzling subject, yet the one which has increasingly become a very crucial issue for many countries around the world. Particularly multi-ethnic and multi-national states are experiencing a

significant rise in the demands by various identity groups. These demands range from self-recognition and self-representation to autonomy and independence. However, here we cannot debate this subject in its global context. Our primary purpose is to discuss specifically the nature of Kashmiri identity and the growing demands for its recognition in Britain. Nevertheless a brief discussion of the concept of identity seems an appropriate starting point for talking about Kashmiri identity.

Then we will look into the nature of Kashmiri identity in Britain and in Kashmir. But as we will see, the nature and rise of Kashmiri identity cannot be explained and understood out of its historical context in Britain as well as in Kashmir. Therefore, we have to take a short trip to the history of Kashmiris in Kashmir and their migration to Britain. Doing this the particular aspect of Kashmiris through which I will explain the growth of Kashmiri identity is the political activism. Only because I find it relatively convenient to grasp and explain the process of Kashmiri identity in its political form.

Another important reason for studying Kashmiri identity in its British and Kashmiri context is the close relationship between the struggles for right to self-determination in various parts of Kashmir with the activities of Kashmiris in Britain. But as

we will see this relationship is currently going through a major change. The focus of British Kashmiris is increasingly shifting from the situation inside Kashmir to that of Kashmiris' in Britain. Reasons for this shift in my view are both in the changes taking place in and around Kashmiris in Kashmir as well as in Britain. But due to its greater relevance I will talk particularly about the changes in Britain.

So let us start with the notion of identity!

As indicated earlier I am going to discuss only those aspects of the concept of identity which have greater relevance with the campaign for Kashmiri recognition in Britain. Firstly, people have various, sometimes overlapping and occasionally conflicting identities at various times and in various situations.

For example we are here today specifically to talk about our Kashmiri identity and to discuss and find ways to have it recognized nationally. So that the barriers and difficulties we face in various aspects of life in Britain are identified and addressed. But that is not to say that we do not have any other identities which we are attached to as much as with our Kashmiri identity. Our religious identity for instance, which we the Muslims from Kashmir share with Muslims all over the world, including those in and from India and Pakistan. OR our Asian identity in Britain

which we share with all other Asians here. Or black identity, which many of us feel attached to in the context of racism and colonialism. By putting emphasis on Kashmiri identity I am in no way arguing to undermine any of these identities all of which have their relevance and importance in their own spheres. We the people of non-British origins share a wealth of experiences in relation to our present as well as our past. Similarly there are layers of identities that can be perhaps called 'domestic' identities such as biradrie or tribal identities including Raja, Jat, Bhains Khawaja and so on.

However, I do feel that

> *"there are aspects of Kashmiri life in Britain, which are not and in my view cannot be recognized under any of above three identity labels unless and until Kashmiri identity is recognized on equal terms with other identities within British and within that the black, Asian or Muslim projects of identity in Britain."*

We will see that the history of Kashmiris in Britain and in Kashmir, which I am going to talk about shortly, is NOT the history of the Indians or Pakistanis in Britain but of Kashmiris. The label of Pakistani under which Kashmiris are currently been identified obscures and silences this history. This argument alone is sufficient to prove the need for Kashmiri recognition. Because after all is not identity about the roots of the people's memories and shared experiences which gives them the motivation and confidence necessary requirement for a healthy participation and contribution in the society they live in?

Otherwise why the recognition of Indian identity, Pakistani identity, Irish identity, Caribbean identity and so on? Why not just black and ethnic minorities? Of course the peoples belonging to the above ethnic identities did not feel that black identity speaks for and of their specific experiences, history and culture and that is why they demanded the differences within black identities to be recognized. That is exactly what Kashmiris are demanding. Our history our experiences are silenced in the current labels of Pakistani, Indian or Muslim and Asian identities which claim to be representing all Asian and Muslims but in practice both of these labels speaks predominantly of the Indians and Pakistanis experiences and heritage and not of us, Kashmiris.

Another feature of identity, which adds to its complexity, is its fluid and constantly changing nature. Identity is not a static phenomenon. It is always in the process of making, unmaking and remaking depending on the nature of barriers blocking its way and the relevance and support it enjoys at any given time and under any given conditions to overcome these barriers. For example what has brought us here today as Kashmiris is this feeling or sense that Kashmiri identity is being undermined and marginalized at various levels of the British state and society. Now it is the effectiveness and relevance of our campaign, which will determine the future of Kashmiri identity in Britain. Greater the support and relevance to the lives of Kashmiris we manage to build stronger are the chances that it will overcome the barriers and will survive.

Also, there are no guarantees about identities. British Bangladeshis were Pakistanis till 1971. Scots are British today. East Punjabis and Sikhs are Indian. Any radical change in the state structures in South Asia or here in Britain will change the present identity map altogether and who knows what else. Therefore we cannot talk about identity, any identity, in absolute terms. So when I talk of Kashmiri identity I talk in relative terms. At this stage I feel relatively more Kashmiri than other identities I have. But at a different time and under different circumstances I may feel

relatively more 'black' than Kashmiri and so on. Or you may have different relative identities at various times and under various conditions. Then there is a Diaspora aspect of the ethnic minorities' identities in Britain. People live, physically here but feel an attachment with the land and society far away. This far away land is the past of us, which is not same as the one which is gone by into the history and lives only in memories or in history material and we can visit this through memories and history only. This past of ours in the far away land is not only alive and visitable but also affects and is affected by our present. In the case of Kashmiris this living past is more living than others particularly those of Indians and Pakistanis. So no matter how we pretend, particularly those of us who have some level of consciousness of our present and past in Kashmir a significant element of resentment is always there to trigger off until and unless the later identities accept our distinct past and present.

Of course we share a great deal 'here' and 'there' with Indians and Pakistanis and with Punjabis and Pothowaris in particular but the commonalties can forge the basis of a greater unity only if the differences are recognized and respected. Therefore, the argument that demands for Kashmiri recognition is divisive is not helpful at all. The argument is indeed damaging not only for

the Pakistani and Muslim/South Asian and black identities but also for Kashmiris. For it contributes in keeping over half a million British Kashmiris subdued and silenced. This approach to achieve unity without recognizing and mutually respecting the diversity has failed in South Asian and is failing here in Britain. A brief historical overview of the making of Kashmiri identity in Britain explains my argument further and exposes the irrelevance of the 'unity in silence' argument. Particularly this assumption that some kind of unity exists which is threatened by the demands for Kashmiri recognition. For this it is the history we need to turn to.

Kashmiri identity in Britain: Historical background

I think most of us here know but many perhaps do not that migration from Kashmir to Britain was started as early as before the Second World War[122]. Who exactly were these peoples and where exactly in Kashmir they came from? No research material on early migration from South Asia answers these specific questions. For example Rozina Visram in her book " Ayahs, Lascars and princes'' labels all early immigrants as Indians and Rashmi Desai

[122] Later on Roger Ballard's research on British Kashmiris (he calls them Mirpuris) informed that labour migration from Mirpur started at the turn of twentieth century.

states in "the Indian Immigrants in Britain" published in 1963 that before 1949 there were around five hundred Indian immigrants. However, she does note that many of these early migrants came from those parts of India, which are now in Pakistan. With the help of information provided by the older generation of Kashmiris combined with the recent research by Dr Roger Ballard of Manchester University, we can establish that many of these early 'Indians' in fact came from the Mirpur district of the state of Jammu and Kashmir which at that time was united and not a part of (British) India.

According to Ballard peasants from Mirpur started working on British merchant navy ships from the beginning of the twentieth century. The pioneers of Kashmiri migration to Britain were these Kashmiris some of whom left their ships at various British coasts and scattered into different coast towns long before the Second World War. It is now established that the pioneers originated from Dadyal area of Mirpur.

What sense of identity these Kashmiris had in their mind is an interesting question but perhaps irrelevant as for as they were concerned. Although I have never met any of these early Kashmiris to ask this question, but have asked from some of their generation, which they left behind in Kashmir. My grandmother whose actual date of

birth nobody knows but god, but who is certainly over 90 is one of these. She tells that at their time they were very well aware that where the boundaries of their Maharaja's state ended and that of Aungrezi Illaqas' (English Areas) began. It is interesting to note here that the identity that spread with British Empire was not British but English. We may need to recall this point at a later stage. Here the point I am trying to make is that a sense of distinctiveness was there in the Kashmiri mind from the moment when first Kashmiri set foot on British soil. However, I am not sure that the need or opportunity to express this sense was there. They were natives in the colonies and aliens in Britain and unable to demonstrate any other identity but the one given by the masters of their destiny. Or perhaps they or some of them did express this to somebody or to their landlords, white girlfriends with whom according to Desai they lived in 'colored areas'. But who knows?

A couple of weeks back a very interesting situation about the identity of these early Kashmiris developed in Bradford when listeners of the Radio Ramzan were asked various questions of the 'who was first' nature. There was this question that who was the first Pakistani in Britain? Many Kashmiris phoned in and asked the presenters whether the questions include Kashmiris or just Pakistanis?

'For us all are Pakistanis' was the reply. Protesting voices were silenced. But one tactful voice managed to be heard. This man of Kashmiri origin told the presenters that the first 'Pakistani' was Bava Bukko (Baqa Mohammed) and he was from Mora Heeran village of Mirpur district in 1928. 'Thank you very much' said the presenter.

'But. Hello!

The voice wanted to say more ' yes ji' said the presenter. 'But there was no Pakistan then. So who was Bava Baqa?' and the line went silent.

We know that all these Bavas had their distinct identity but so had other ethnic minorities. However, till recently in terms of ethnic identity all were considered black in terms of their political identity. More on that later. Now let us move to the next phase of Kashmiri migration to Britain.

Kashmiri Migration from 50s to 90s

Rashmi Desai notes that by 1960s the number of Pakistanis in Britain rose to seventy thousands. And who amongst the Kashmiris who came then or recently from Kashmir does not know that the end of 1950s and beginning of 60s was the period when the Mirpur town and hundreds of houses, businesses, schools, Mandars and Masjids and graveyards in its surrounding areas were flooded

under the waters of Mangla Lake? According to various academic sources (Ballard, R ; Kalea VS) and those Kashmiris who experienced this disappearance of the centuries old history and civilisation of Mirpur, over one hundred thousand Kashmiris were displaced. Many of them who managed to secure compensation preferred to come to Britain instead of going into remote parts of Punjab and Sindh in Pakistan. This was also the time when the Immigration Act 1962 introduced 'Voucher System' with new constraints on entry to Britain. Consequently many Kashmiris in Britain sent vouchers to their friends and relatives who joined them here in 60s. So again it is not difficult to establish that majority of these immigrants from Pakistan in 60s came from Kashmir. In 1970s more Kashmiris, mainly women and children came to Britain to avoid restrictions to be introduced through another Immigration law on families and children.

1980s and 90s are commonly known as the decades of Mungehters and Buzurugs or Bays and Bavas of the older generation of Kashmiris with no one to look after in Mirpur.

At present the Kashmiri population in Britain is estimated about seven hundred thousand. The estimate is based on the claims made by such academics as Roger Ballard that in the regions of two thirds of the Pakistanis in are in fact from

Azad Kashmir. Birmingham, Bradford and Luton are the largest centres with all other major towns as the homes of thousands of Kashmiris.

Almost 99% of these Kashmiris have their roots in Mirpur division of Kashmir. There are around two hundred families, mainly of professionals from Valley and some from Jammu, Gilgit Baltistan, Muzafferabad, Rawalakott and Poonch etc.

Now let us try to trace some signs from past and see how Kashmiris expressed their distinct identity in Britain.

Early signs of Kashmiri identity in Britain

If I were making a television documentary on the early expressions of Kashmiri identity I would have zoomed on this house on St Ann's Hill off Wood Borough road Nottingham. Owned by one Sufi M. Azam since 1960 this is known amongst many active Kashmiris all over Britain as 'Kashmir House'. An old man in his seventies Mr. Azam belongs to that generation of Kashmiris who initiated the tradition of expressing Kashmiri identity in Britain through demos and public rallies around Kashmir issue focusing ostensibly on the Indian occupied Kashmir. Organising protest demonstrations on the arrival of the Indian leaders in Britain was the favourite political activity for this generation of Kashmiris in Britain and Mr Azam along with several others including

Bava Zman, Ghazi Rehman, Ghulam Nabi Rachiyal, were at the forefront.

Then we find the formation of the Kashmir Independence movement (KIM) in Glasgow in 1960s with the late Babu Abdul Rahim and Lala Abdul Rehman of Nottingham at the forefront. A staunch supporter of the Independence of Kashmir Babu Rahim told me that originally we formed KIM to support the Anti Mangla Dam Movement but later also started to highlight the independence movement from its platform. Of course there were many more individuals involved in various organisations all of whose names I don't have. The reason for mentioning some of these names from two different ideological strands of Kashmiri identity and politics is to make the point that Kashmiri activism in Britain is not a recent phenomenon. However, till late sixties and seventies it was led by the generation of Kashmiris in Britain which was born before 1930s. It was late 1960s with the emergence of National Liberation Front and its several guerrilla activities in line with the then dominant global national liberation movements that the 'midnight children' of Kashmiri origins woke up in Britain. Birmingham being the home of Kashmiris from Didyaal and surrounding areas with the offspring of Ansaris' families produced a chain of activities and Kashmiri organisations, which were consequently developed into JKLF in 1977.

1980s, February 1984 to be precise, appears as the most crucial month both for Kashmiri identity in Britain and for the independence movement in Kashmir. During the first week of this month a tragic drama started with the kidnapping and subsequent killing of Arvindra Mahatre, an Indian diplomat. In the second week on 11th February Indian government of Indira Ghandi executed the NLF leader Maqbool Butt after 9 years of imprisonment. These two incidents arguably caused many setbacks for the independence movement but they certainly activated large number of Kashmiris hitherto indifferent to the struggle. I myself became involved in the first conscious political activity of my life on 11th of February when Kashmiri students of various political views organised a forceful protest outside of the Indian High Commission in Karachi Pakistan. Since these events were covered widely by the media around the world a strong wave of excitement and youthful pride swept younger generation of Kashmiris where ever they were. Martyrdom of Maqbool Butt remains till this day the strongest symbol of modern Kashmiri identity in Kashmir.

Just three years after Maqbool Butt's hanging the youths in Srinagar came pouring into the streets of this largest city of Kashmir waving Maqbool Butt's Pictures and JKLF's flags and chanting anti-Indian occupation and pro-independence slogans. As the

JKLF was formed in Britain, the coverage in British media of uprising in the valley gave a steep rise to its popularity amongst British Kashmiris only to meet a steep fall in 1992 when 'split phenomenon' caused a general sense of 'in-activism' amongst most of its members. This left a massive gap in the British fields of Kashmiri activism.

This gap was filled to the surprise of many by those strands of Kashmiri activism viewed by many as least concerned with Kashmir in the sense of Kashmiri independence. This was also beginning of a new type of activism amongst British Kashmiris. All Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference is one of the major electoral parties in that part of Kashmir which to some is Azad or free, to some others Pakistani controlled or administered and to some more, Pakistani occupied Kashmir still to others Pakistani Occupied Southern Kashmir. Formed in 1931 as the first ever mass political party in the history of Kashmir under the leadership of famous Sheikh Abdullah and Choudhary Ghulam Abbass, Muslim Conference was transformed into National Conference in 1938. However, in 1939, Ghulam Abbass hitherto a staunch supporter of Nationalism left National Conference protesting against growing closeness between National Conference and the Indian National Congress. He, according to professor Ishaq Qureshi the acting

General Secretary of Muslim Conference around 1946-47, along with some other opponents of National Conference revived Muslim Conference in 1939 under the patronage of Zafar Ali Khan of Indian Muslim League. Since then Muslim Conference and National Conference played a significant role in determining the fate of Kashmir as it is today. A brief overview of history offered below as in my view this is useful to understand that Kashmiri identity is no confined to some nationalist or pro-independence Kashmiris in Britain. It has been and remains a wider phenomenon.

After the invasion of Indian and Pakistani armies and division of Kashmir in 1947 a group of Muslim Conference activists led by Ghulam nabi Gilkar declared the provisional government of the Republic of Kashmir on 4th October 1947. This was reorganised on 24th of October, just four days after the Pakistani tribal invasion, into Azad Kashmir Government. Since then most of the time Muslim Conference remained the main ruling party in this government till 1970s when Peoples Party came on the scene and formed government. In the years that followed it has mainly been either PPP or MC running the [internal] affairs of 'Azad' Kashmir.

The scale of mobilization of British Kashmiris demonstrated by these two parties over past some years, in my view, has never been witnessed in

Britain accept the historical London demonstration following the hanging of Maqbool Butt by the Indian Government in Tihaar Prison Delhi. Cashing on the recent mass upsurge in the Indian Occupied Kashmir and utilizing the biraderi networks amongst Kashmiris from Mirpur these two Kashmiri parties played a major role in activating that section of Kashmiri population which hitherto has little involvement in any kind of politics. While JKLF and other Kashmiri organisations engaged the relatively younger and educated sections of Kashmiris, these parties pulled thousands of Kashmiris from older generation to the public meetings addressed by the prominent leaders of these parties, including the ex and present presidents and prime ministers of the Kashmir government.
Another feature of this form of British Kashmiri mobilisation and activism which distinguishes it from the previous has been that they went into the town halls or brought the representatives of the local and national political system into their gatherings. They have asserted Kashmiri identity before thousands of Kashmiris and representatives of various British political parties and local councils. The link between the two has been the local councillors of Kashmiri origin who in return get dual benefits. On the one hand they built contacts with the representatives of Kashmiri government which gives them opportunities to

create some individual influence in (azad) Kashmir political and administrative structure. On the other hand they lead and direct this mobilisation around Kashmir issue towards the 'selection' meetings of the British parties and towards the polling booths on the Election Day here in Britain. Consequently the numbers of Kashmiri councillors across Britain have significantly increased since 1990. So has their importance within their parties. I am not sure of the extent their influence in these parties has also increased if it did at all. The appointment of two lords of Kashmiri origin and scores of British Kashmiris getting party nominations and some in very safe seats shows that their significance has been increased. The links British Kashmiris forge through this double activism with Kashmir, British Kashmiris and local authorities have initiated a trend of 'friendship' between Mirpur and various towns across Britain. Previously the twining and friendships were formed with the Pakistani towns such as Saiwal and Rochdale.

All these factors and processes combined with the growing success of British Kashmiris in Education, business, local government employment and the national political scene in Britain is culminating into a new kind of Kashmiri activism in Britain. This activism is increasingly becoming anxious about the Kashmiris' position here in Britain. The demands for recognition are the one form of

expressing this shifting focus of Kashmiris in Britain.

At this point we need to take a flight to Kashmir to look at the present state and status of Kashmiri identity and how it has survived the onslaught of the military invasions and the subsequent hegemony of the Indian and Pakistani nationalism in Kashmir.

In Kashmir

But before that a point of clarification which to me seems very important. Talking about the present situation and the history of Kashmir I do not intend to talk about the party politics or various ideologies and struggles about the future of Kashmir. Instead I will talk about the nature of Kashmiri identity in Kashmir today and the historical conditions and events, which gave birth and nurtured Kashmiri identity. Again, like that with British political activism I will identify some major strands in Kashmiri identity and explain some of them.

Currently Kashmir is divided in three main parts under the occupation of India and Pakistan since 1947. During these years new identities and labels have been emerged and constructed to describe the regions and peoples of Kashmir. For instance Pakistan and all Kashmiris opposing India occupation describe areas under Indian occupation as 'The Indian Occupied Kashmir'

(IOK). India calls these areas as the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. But to the areas under Pakistani areas, including Gilgit and Baltistan India describes as 'The Pakistani Occupied Kashmir'. However, officially Pakistan along with the officials of Azad Kashmir government, term these areas as 'Azad Kashmir' and Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistanis identify Gilgit Baltistan as 'Northern Areas'. But those Kashmiris who are opposed to the Pakistani as well as Indian occupation in Kashmir see these areas as Pakistani occupied Kashmir (POK). To make a distinction between 'Azad' Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan areas, pro independence Kashmiris identify the farmer as Pakistani Occupied Southern Kashmir (POSK) and the later as Pakistani Occupied Northern Kashmir (PONK). Recently Pakistan has returned the Gilgit Baltistan names back to these areas. Also some local nationalist groups have introduced a new identity for Gilgit and Baltista – the Balawaristan?.

Diversity within Kashmiri identity

Kashmir, like most of other societies in the world, is the home of various regional, ethnic, cultural and social groupings with as many identities. Linguistically 34 per cent of the population speak Koshur, 15 per cent Dogri and 30 per cent Pahari. According to 1921 census 181, 739 people spoke Bhotia (Ladakhi and Balti), 1,256, 886 Kashmiri and 425,850 Dogri. In addition Shina and

Brushaski are spoken in Astore and Gilgit regions. Koshur also known as Kashiri is mainly spoken in the Kashmir Valley but is also used in Poonch, Uri and Reasi areas. Dogri is spoken in Jammu province. Gojeri and Pahari are also significant linguistic identities. All British Kashmiris except those two hundred families from the Valley and few from Gilgit or Baltistan speak Pahari as their mother tongue. However, the academic such as Ballard claim that this is a dialect of Punjabi and infers from this that Mirpuris are essentially Punjabis. Many Pahari speaking Kashmiris would also say that they speak Punjabi some even would say they speak Urdu as mother tongue. However, a little probing would reveal that this situation is an outcome of the Pakistani occupation and of the perception amongst Kashmiris that "who knows about our language"? So for the convenience of the researcher and service providers Kashmiris call their language Punjabi or Urdu because they think that these are known languages and theirs is unknown. Subsequently, they look down upon themselves and are also looked down generally by Punjabi and Urdu speakers.

Religiously the Christians, Sikhs, Hindus Buddhists and Muslims are inhabitant in Kashmir for centuries. Within religious and linguistic identities there exist cast or biraderi identities which are often trans- religion and language identities. For example many Muslim Kashmiris of

the Valley who were converted to Islam from Brahmin and Kshatriya casts still use their cast identities as Pundit, Kohl, Butt, Rishi, Rainas and dars etc. Similarly Rajputs and Jatts can be Muslims as well as Hindus and so on.

The important point to note about the diversity is that it is not a unique phenomenon of the Kashmiri society. Most countries in the world are multi-racial, multicultural and even 'multi-nations' states. However, due to the Indian and Pakistani occupation and the inability of the world political, media and academia to see behind the hegemony of the occupying states in Kashmir, this diversity is currently being used as an excuse and justification to divide Kashmir between Indian and Pakistan. That is why the most important task for those forces in Kashmir struggling for a united independent Kashmir is to build a Kashmir-wide organisation which should and must be able to recognise and give voice to this diversity of identities. For no project of unity can be achieved and maintained without addressing the question of multiple identities in a manner acceptable to the other identities than that of Kashmiri as well. However, our concern here is not the independence movement but the rise of Kashmiri identity as national political identity amongst Kashmiri peoples. It is this issue I now turn to.

For this we have to “un-occupy” and unite Kashmir and go back into Kashmir history.

While the written record of Kashmir history can be traced as back as two thousands and five hundred years BC, we cannot afford to go that back into history here. However, two points in relation to the history of Kashmir before its formation in the present form in 1846 seem crucial. Firstly, this is predominantly the history of the Kashmir Valley and not of the Kashmir state as it exists now. But that is not to say that no interaction existed between the component parts of present Kashmir during the early periods. As recorded in “Gulzar E Kashmir” by Dewan Karpa Ram and “Tareekh E Kashmir” by Munshi Mohammed Deen faouq, at least three of the earliest rulers of Kashmir were from Jammu. It appears from Bamzai (1967) Hewitt (1997) that the earliest links between various regions of contemporary Kashmir can be traced from the 1st century AD when Buddhism came to Valley and spread to Ladakh and other parts of present day Kashmir. Another link existed throughout the history of these areas through the conquests by the Valley rulers such as Lalita Ditia in 4th century and Zaian Ul Abidin Budd Shah in 14th century. Then we find through Bamzai that these areas experienced mutual migration to avoid the natural disasters and oppression of the rulers. In 14th century we find a peoples revolt in Valley against the domination of Central Asian and

Persian elite in the government machinery. In this revolt, led by one Tazi Butt, hundreds of people from Gilgit and Jammu also participated. Soon after an army from Valley in the command of the same Tazi Butt came to Jammu and successfully protected the area from Tataris.

Therefore the formation of present day Kashmir State in 1840s was not the first experience of the peoples of Jammu, Valley and Ladakh and later Gilgit to be part of a common government. However, it must be noted that experiences of common rule in the pre-State era were not as consolidative as one hundred and one years of the Maharaja rule.

The second point is that through the conquests and domination spread over centuries Kashmir Valley achieved a relatively high level of development in various walks of life. For example Srinagar was and remains the most advance urban centre with compare to the other towns of Kashmir. The relevance of this point is that it has been due to this historically advanced position of the Kashmiri identity that it emerged as the national identity during the Maharaja period, which we now turn to.Due to space constraints I will go through the main landmarks of Kashmiri identity during Maharaja Rule.

The first major step towards the creation of present day Kashmir was the treaty of Amritsar

signed on 16th of March 1846 by the Jammu ruler Gulab Singh and Hardinge later Lord of the East India Company. This treaty handed over the Kashmir Valley and the adjacent territories in the independent possession of Gulab Singh and his male body heirs. In return the later had to pay seven point five million rupees to the company.

Thus was formed the state of Jammu and Kashmir and Frontier Illaqas and was against this background and in this framework that the Kashmiri identity we are talking about here today was constructed and developed.

Two processes of Identity construction can be clearly identified in this state: One from 'above' through the establishment of a state wide administrative system to extract as much revenue as possible. Details of this can be seen in "The development of the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir" by A.S. Anand reprinted by the Verinag Publishers Mirpur Azad Kashmir.

The other is from "below" through popular uprisings and mass political organizations, which was a phenomenon unique to the Maharaja period and did not exist before. The first sign of this popular political activity appeared in the form of Silk workers strikes in Srinagar factories from as early as 1847 then in 1866. In 1889 Kashmir saw the first land reforms giving new incentives to peasant to till the land. For due to high

government share cultivation was sharply declining. In the first decade of this century educated Kashmiri pundits from the Valley demanded greater share in state services which were dominated by the officers from British India. The slogan was “Kashmir for Kashmiris”. Needs probing if Kashmir to these pundits meant the Valley only? However, with the involvement of educated persons from other parts of the state the demand developed into “State for State peoples” and resulted into the definition of state subject in 1927. Kashmir was the only state that introduced this citizenship legislation in the whole princely India. The state subject remains the basis for a Kashmiri citizenship that is distinct from Indian and Pakistanis. While India and Pakistan that have occupied parts of Kashmir since 1947 recognise the distinct Kashmiri identity but ironically the distinct Kashmiri identity is not recognised here in democratic Britain where diversity is rightly and proudly celebrated.

The next article offers a for more deeper analysis of the evolution of Kashmiri identity from its orgins in the Satisar lake to present day claims of it being a political national identity.

Kashmiri Identity

Cultural, Regional or Political National?

Presented below are some thoughts on the development and problems of Kashmiri as the national political identity of what is officially known as 'The state of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha'. In my view the most challenging task for independence politics in Kashmir across the division at present is to develop an inclusive approach to national identity for the state.

The journey to nationhood and achieving a national identity has never been a smooth and straightforward process for any nation. Everywhere in the world, and throughout the history of the nation-state and national movements, different forces contested for the prominence or domination of certain groups or regions in a land or state of multiple ethnic or regional groups. However, the nature intensity of

the challenges and contestations as well as complexities concerning national independence and identity struggles has been different in different countries at different times.

India for example that homes perhaps one of the richest range of multiplicities from religious through regional to ethnic and even national face challenges that are also multifaceted. One of the common challenges in relation to national identity here is the domination of certain identity within in the Hindu religion namely the Brahmins. At the same time there is linguistic challenge to the Indian identity because several millions Indians do not speak Hindi and many do not want to. Take the example of Mr Azami's case in Marashtra Assembly.

Britain is considered as the oldest democracy on earth. Here several tribes and nations evolved into one Kingdom. Interestingly, the origins of British, the wider national identity for Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England – are rooted in a tribe named 'Briton' that was one of many tribes inhabited this island in the ancient times and gradually grew into wider identity of the entire kingdom. Even here in Britain the identity questions are not fully resolved and perhaps never will be because as Stuart Hall, a Black Afro Caribbean British social scientist claims and others agree that Identity is always in making.

Kashmir is no exception. Here too the question of identity is no longer a question, that 'we will look into once the independence is achieved' as most of the Kashmiri nationalists used to say to evade it until late 1980s. Today the questions concerning Kashmiri identity are thrown into open by a series of events and developments in and outside of 'The Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet ha' state – as Kashmir officially been called since its formation as a modern state over a century and half ago.

The challenges related to Kashmiri as national identity do not pose any real problem for the proponents of Kashmir's division and/or accession to India or Pakistan. For nationally, in terms of nation-state, they see themselves as Indians or Pakistanis. They, however, have different challenges such as which parts of the state will be able protect their distinct identity and autonomy granted within the Kahsmir state once they merged with India or Pakistan? Similarly, those who argue for a Muslim Ummah and Khilafat also do not see Kashmiri identity of any significance than a description of the Valley and their language which actually is Kohsar or Kashiri but has become synonymous with Kashmiri.

This article looks into the growth of Kashmiri identity as a political national identity of the state subjects from ancient to modern Kashmir history. For it appers that despite the challenges posed by

the Indian and Pakistani nationalisms and military occupation, support for what is usually called third but at least for half of Kashmiri (state) population is the first option has grown significantly over the past few decades. This is more noticeable amongst the youth who not only identify with Kashmiri as their national political identity but actually resist vigorously the hegemony of Indian identity on one side and Pakistani identity on other side of the division line mainly in the Valley and Azad Kashmir. Some signs of rising Kashmiri identity can also be noted across the globe in diaspora including UK, Europe, Middle East, Africa, USA and Canada. This has been manifested in a massive uprising and militant clashes between Kashmiri youth especially in Valley and Indian occupation forces and consistent demands by the 'Azad' Kashmiris for constitutional changes to remove restrictions on pro-independence Kashmiris' participation in employment and politics. The diaspora Kashmiris through their active involvement in Kashmiri politics have also constructed their Kashmiri identity away from the land of their origin.

The Kashmir National Identity campaign in UK has come a long way from its birth in 1999. Over half a dozen local authorities now recognise Kashmiri as a distinct ethnic group in their ethnic monitoring systems. The National Census Office has

principally recognized the existence of a distinct Kashmiri community in UK but argue that the community does not qualify for a separate category or 'tick-box' because demand is not strong enough and because some people told them that it would confuse the Indians and Pakistanis and Kashmiris. Kashmiri recognition has also grown in Media and Academia and amongst British politicians at different levels.

In this article I have raised and discussed some of the less talked about questions regarding Kashmir identity from various perspectives. However, I must clarify here that the purpose is to engage people in a serious debate and not to undermine the aspirations, sacrifices, dedication and struggle of Kashmiris across the division line and around the globe.

What I have understood so far about national identity formation and whatever I have learnt about the origins and development of Kashmiri identity, I have brought it out here for the interested readers and expect that the readers will critically comment on that and develop the debate further. The debate is too big and complex for me to claim that I have all the answers. Instead, I have questions and views.

Origin of Kashmir and Kashmiri Identity: Cultural or Geographic?

The first and in my view the key questions in debating Kashmiri identity include what is the nature of this identity? What it meant at its birth? Was it a geographic or a cultural description? Did it mean certain people speaking certain language and following certain religion?

According to the available information the present day Kashmir Valley was originally a vast lake called Satisar. In this lake there lived a massive creature called 'Jaladeo' ('jal' water/ paani and 'deo' Giant/Ballaha/Beast/ Dinosaur?) who caused trouble for the inhabitants around the lake. The lake was later drained by Kasayap who also killed the Jaladeo and the land that emerged from water was given the name of its savior Kasayap.

How reliable is the myth scientifically is not as important a question here as the widely held popular views about the name given to this lake once it was drained. According to the ancient historical literature including the famous Rajataranagani, the land reclaimed from water was called Kasayap Mar that, as the myth goes on, gradually evolved into Kashmir.

The myth also tells us that the surrounding vicinities of the Lake Satisar were inhibited by people who other sources tell were Naga and Pisacha people. When the water was drained and the Valley became inhabitable the Nagas and Pachachas came down from the surrounding mountains and started 'living' (whatever form of life was called 'living' at that time) in the Valley which they gradually came to call Kashyap Mar and then Kashmir. Various travellers described the region with names not exactly same but similar to Kashmir. For details see Bamzai PNK (1967).

Originally there is no indication whatsoever that the name Kashmir denoted to any people. It clearly meant a geographical description for a land that was emerged from water. So whatever the origin and nature of the myths, it is clear that the term Kashmir from its origin has been used for a geographical space or in other words it has been a spatial term. As the accounts of later history tell us the land of Kashmir fluctuated with the control of its rulers whoever they were at whatever stages and phases of the five thousand long years of history, a written and uninterrupted record of which is available only for Kashmir Valley and its adjacent territories and for no other South Asian countries.

Kashmir and Kashmiris

How and when the term 'Kashmir' became synonymous with Kashiri or Koshar speaking inhabitants of the Valley remains to be explored. However, as can be noted from above, Kashmir was never exclusively a cultural or linguistic description for the Koshar speaking people of Kashmir State. It is a geographic identity more like 'Indus' the origin of the Indian identity and has the potential to encompass all the people who become part of the jurisdiction of Kashmir.

How did the non-Valley people become Kashmiris? Well, this is one of the most difficult questions facing the Kashmiri political struggle for unification and independence today. Let's briefly go back again to the mythical era.

Originally Kashmiris were those people who lived in this Kashmir Valley not necessarily that they called themselves Kashmiris or identity in its modern form had any significance for them at the times when everything was understood with reference to supernatural powers. However, for the sake of discussion, we can claim that the people who inhabited the land that was named Kashmir were Kashmiris. But they were not Kashmiris because they spoke particular language or followed a particular religion but because they lived on a particular land. In other words Kashmiri was never

a religious or cultural or linguistic identity but a geographical identity incorporating all languages and religions of the people lived 'there'. Now this 'there' (Kashmir) a geographical location of course never stayed the same. Its area kept changing from the time of its emergence from water to this day. For example when the lake was drained it became connected with the land that was around the land so soon it was drained and turned from lake Satisar to valley Kashyap Mar the size of its area changed and so did the boundaries of its description or identity of 'Kashyapmar'. After it got connected with the areas around the lake or the areas got connected with the newly land emerged from the lake they all became one land. What this original imaginative discussion tells is this. The description originally given to the land that was reclaimed from water kept changing with the area of the land and when in the later eras of its history the rule or jurisdiction of this land expanded to the areas beyond its mountains and valleys they also became known as Kashmir in political terms of course.

However, during the centuries and millenniums that followed, the term Kashmir extended, stretched and spread beyond the Valley across the regions that form the present day State that officially called Jammu and Kashmir and Frontier *Illaqas*; areas (or Tibet Ha)' and through diaspora

far beyond. Various channels and processes can be noted through which the description of Kashmir expanded and evolved into a wider political notion and a national identity that encompasses an area that has clearly been a site of contestation between the Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri nationalisms since 1947.

The earliest contribution in expanding Kashmir was made by the people who were living on the mountains and perhaps other valleys around the Valley when it was a lake before it was drained and became known as Kashmir Valley. We know of them as Nagas and Pachachas. They inhibited this Valley and called it Kashyap Marg and linked it with the surrounding mountains expanding its boundaries beyond the Valley. In the years that followed Kashmir became site of a distinct civilisation and hub of administrative, trade and military activism. It is only logical to assume that whoever came from wherever called this region Kashmir (in so many pronunciations) not only the valley and surrounding mountains but the surrounding valleys and lesser known inhabitations and dwellings. So the term Kashmir while had the Valley at its core was never confined to the geographical location of the Valley. Let's elaborate on this process of Kashmiri identity formation through some local cases.

Identity Formation: some local cases

It is a common practice even today to identify and describe areas of several identities by one common name usually the better known one. The choice of that name for wider area as 'reference' identity is not a deliberate process or an event of 'naming' or giving a name, but it is usually a long process that evolves any particular region into 'reference' or ' signifier' for a region wider than its actual or original geographic space or specific spatial area. It can be a village, region or a country. It is fairly a universal phenomenon and not confined to any one part of the world as far as I know.

I have offered below an example that is very local to me and to all those people who are in or from Akalgarh and surrounding villages. The readers can easily think of similar cases in their localities. My village is called 'Mohra (abode) Loharaan' and is surrounded by Mohra Rattiyan and Mohra Rakhiyalan northern side, barren broken land (purraha) on eastern and western sides and Andraha and Bidranmora on the southern side. Further up from Rakhiyalaan and Rattiyan Mohras is Bazar, called *Chawok*; four ways, and beyond that towards the north-East is Akalgarh. Around Akalgarh then there are so many other villages including New Town, Kalyal, Hayderabad, Khayee na Merra, Kerri, Hayderabad, Karnerri, Mankra, Gurra Naswal, Rarra and so on. However, you ask

anyone from these villages living in UK (majority lives here) 'where are you from in Mirpur' and they will more likely say Akalgarh if you are not from Akalgarh. They will tell you the name of their village if they know you are from Akalgarh or know that you know Akalgarh well. So for outsiders the Akalgarh identity grew far wider than its actual physical or geographic space or spatial location. In other words the 'Akalgari' identity detached from and became free of its spatial fixation to encompass so many villages around it. Now Akalgarvis have not consciously constructed this identity to be 'imposed' on others. The description 'Akalgarh' has its origins according to local mythology in the name of a person and a circular wall that he constructed to protect herds of his goats and sheep from wild animals. The person was called 'Kala' and the wall he constructed with branches of thorny trees is called locally 'the Garh'.

Originally the place came to be known to the people around it as 'Kaley na Garh' (the circular wall of Kala) and gradually shortened to 'Kalgarh' and then with the start of writing tradition in Urdu became 'Akalgarh'. Details are given in 'Naqash Bar Aab' (prints on water) an autobiography of Ch. Mohammed Yousaf, Secretary and Advisor Education (rtd) 'Azad' Government for State of Jammu and Kashmir.

There can be different possible explanations for the growth of Akalgarhvi identity into wider than 'Kaley Na Garh'. For example may be because it has been the ancient most town of some significance in the vicinity. May be it was at one time dominated by the followers of Sikh religion. Although no other evidence backing this argument is available other than the name. Perhaps due to its size maybe because it was located at a point where people from various other regions visited and maybe because here were also the first ever shops opened and so on. Whatever the explanations are more acceptable for the nomenclature Akalagarh, the point I am trying to make here is that it expanded beyond its spatial location.

Now Akalgarh identity could not have grown beyond, say, Rarra or Kanaily that would not be considered within the Akalgarh boundaries. They more likely will say we live 'near' Akalgarh. Further up to Akalgarh you go and Chaksawari becomes a reference name for several villages around that.

This of course is not confined to 'Akalgarh' or 'Chaksawari' it goes in all directions (horizontally) and at different levels (Vertically). Take the example of Mirpur this time. Those who are from Mirpur or been there, or familiar with Mirpur through whatever sources, will know that Mirpur used to be a 'sheher' (city) which was submerged

under the Mangla Lake. However, not only that 'city' but the whole district was known as Mirpur, officially as well as commonly. Bhimber and Kotali were its Tehseels or sub districts then. However, when Bhimber and Kotali became districts in their own right, they became reference points at district levels but because Mirpur became a division so at the divisional level they are still called Mirpur. That is one of the reasons that the identity of all those migrated from these areas of 'Azad' Kashmir to UK has emerged as 'Mirpuri' even though many came from Bhimber and Kotali.

This is also true for Jammu. There is Jammu city and then there is Jammu Province. Jammu province includes Mirpur, Rajori and many other prominent towns and places. However, in the context of Kashmir state these cities and places carry the Jammu Identity. However, within Jammu provincial context they have their own identities and Jammu is confined to the City of Jammu. So while Jammu has grown into a provincial identity it could not grow as the national political identity of the state. Therefore, some Jammuwals who oppose Kashmiri as the national identity of the state do so due to the misperception that 'Kashmir' is a cultural identity of the Valley which as argued above it is not.

Oldham in UK where I am settled for past two decades also offers a useful example of how

reference identities are formed. There is a town of Oldham and then there is a Metropolitan Borough of Oldham, which includes Royton, Middleton, and Saddleworth etc. The reference identity for all these regions developed at Metropolitan level is that of Oldham. But within Oldham these other constituent parts of the borough have their own distinct identities.

Kashmiri Identity beyond the Valley

In my view that is how the Kashmiri identity grew into a reference identity for the areas and regions beyond its original spatial boundaries. History provides ample evidence that it has been the most ancient settlement of some significance in this section of Himalayas. It is also obvious from history that Srinagar old and new remains the most ancient centre of economic, military, political and cultural (including religious and intellectual) activities and attracted armies as well as learners and teachers, travellers, entrepreneurs and so on who on their return, to wherever they came from, described the region as Kashmir, according to their own accent of course. This description of Kashmir was not confined to the Valley but for regions between Valley and the next 'reference' region say Punjab on one side and maybe Tibet on the other and so on. Of course in this identity construction there has been a clear element of war and conquests and imposition which, as

mentioned above, can be found in almost all 'national' identities across the globe. The important fact is that Kashmir became the reference point for regions that surrounded it long before the formation of J&K state in 1846. However, during Maharaja Century it became consolidated on what can arguably be called 'modern' grounds both 'from above' and 'from below'.

Kashmiri Identity in the Princely State: 'from above'

On 16th March 1846 Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu signed a treaty with representatives of British East India Company and the British Empire. Now it was not for the first time that Kashmir was taken over or that Kashmir lost its independence. Prior to Amritsar Treaty, Kashmir was under Punjabi Sikh Darbar, who took it from Afghans, who followed Mughals. However, the only difference was that other conquerors shared religion with the Muslim population of Kashmir and Gulab Singh shared religion with the minority of Kashmir Valley. As per the policies I don't think they were different in any significant way from previous rulers both Muslims and Hindus. Indeed most of the oppressive and suppressive policies for which Maharajas have been painted as notorious and cruel rulers were introduced by the Muslim rulers

before them. The Maharajas only continued them for example the practice of *Begar*.

As per Kashmiri identity, it was changed to the 'State of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha'. Three main 'reference identities' of the region became part of one 'State'. It can be argued that this was the formation of a state in its modern form. As we know through the archives of Maharaja Period, while the state was officially called 'The State of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha', the reference identity that emerged for the entire state has been the Kashmiri identity. Not only the British or other foreigners used the description of Kashmir to refer to the entire State but Maharajas from Gulab Singh onwards referred to it as Kashmir in their correspondence as well. They were also referred to as the rulers of Kashmir. Never ever they or anyone else used the term Jammu or Ladakh or Poonch, etc. for the entire state. This in my view was due to the historically evolved position of Kashmiri identity rooted in its military, economic, political and cultural prominence. During maharaja Era the constituent parts of present day Kashmir state were linked and consolidated through physical, cultural and social as well as political infrastructure for communication, transportation, administration and control etc.

It might be of some relevance to claim that until this juncture Kashmiri identity was mainly

constructed 'from above' through the power of rulers and 'from outside' by the travellers and colonials.

Kashmiri Identity in the Princely State: 'from below'

During the Maharaja era, however the identity that was constructed 'from below' also happened to be the Kashmiri identity. It all began in 1930s when the state of 'Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha' started experiencing the waves of what can be called 'popular' politics – the early signs of modern politics actively participated and shaped by ordinary people with the power of their 'numbers', 'collective action' and shared problems and needs and demands. They did not have power based on wealth or authority to subdue others. They had demands and goals and aspirations and so on. They don't seem consciously concerned about their national identity or other identity questions at this juncture. The dominant identity that emerged from this popular politics initially was the Religious Muslim identity for the Muslim masses and Religious Hindu identity for the Hindu rulers. Not that they did not have other identities i.e. state-wide, cast, language, tribe and so on. They had but the shared identity that captured the attention of people at that particular juncture was religious identity because it was almost in line with the 'ruling' and 'ruled' or 'haves' and 'have not's or

whatever description you like to give to the divide in power and wealth relations in the state at that time. From this perspective, the movement initially was depicted as of Muslims against Hindu ruler of the "state"?

State Subject and Kashmiri Identity

Well here two identities seem to run parallel to each other and at times overlapping with reference to the geographical area that was officially called 'The State of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha'. These identities were the 'Riyasati' and 'Kashmiri' identities. The Kashmiri identity was at times confined to the Valley but at other times referred to the entire state. When Hindu Pundits of the Valley initiated the movement against growing domination of British Indians in the State public services they initiated the process that later laid the most prominent and far reaching foundation of the Kashmiri as political identity of the state. They raised the slogan, 'Kashmir for Kashmiris'. This slogan was for the first time raised in 15th century soon after the demise of Bhadd Shah against the domination of Central Asian Muslim elites (See Bamzai, 1967 and Hewitt, 2001 for details). Did by Kashmir the Pundits mean Valley only? Did they want to have only valley Kashmiris employed in the State services of Kashmir valley? Did the Valley have different and independent state services than the rest of the State i.e. Jammu and

Ladakh? Of course not, so I think by 'Kashmir', they meant the entire state. However, that does not mean that other people in the state also considered themselves as 'Kashmiri'. The slogan soon changed into 'State for State people'. This shows that Kashmiri as political national identity was a contested notion. The State Subject Rule' came out of this movement is applicable to this date. Perhaps Kashmir was the only state at that time where the nationality of its people was legally defined. The movement for employment started around 1910 and the final definition of 'State Subjects' was agreed upon, approved and made into law on 20th April 1927. This legislation defined the subjects of this state different from the British India and all surrounding princely states with specific employment, business and property rights and responsibilities. Since then these State Subjects referred to themselves and were referred by others around them as 'Riyasati' (of state) and their state as 'Riyasat' (state). The 'others' from outside of the state continuously referred to the state as Kashmir and to its people as Kashmiris.

The Popular Politics and Kashmiri Identity

A micro analysis would show that the first activist who initiated what can be described as the process of popular political activism was religiously Sikh, Sardar Budh Singh of Mirpur. However, soon geographically the valley of Kashmir became

epicenter of the popular politics which initially was shaped by the religious identity and the first mass movement and political party of the state was named – The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. However, there are two crucial points need to be noted from the record of this period. Firstly, by this time all other religious communities of the state had well established welfare organsiations named after their respective religions. Secondly, the debate between 'national' and 'religious' politics was emerged soon after the formation of Muslim Conference. The debates were although initiated by some 'progressive' Muslim and non-Muslim leaders but gradually encompassed different regions and religions and classes. Following several ups and downs it was finally constitutionalized in the 'New Kashmir' manifesto of 'All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference'. Here Kashmir was used for the entire state as a political identity and not something rooted in and confined to 'Kashiri' speaking population of the state concentrated in and around the Valley. This was the peak of Kashmiri as political identity on its way to become modern 'national' identity of a multiple identities 'nation'-state'. However, the popular politics was unfortunately confined mainly to the Muslim masses. Although there were such non-Muslims at the fore front of popular movement as Sardar Budh Singh, Prem Naath Bazaz, Master Roshan

Lal, Krishan Dev Setti etc. but majority of the Hindus of Jammu and Pundits of Valley sided with the rulers who they shared religion with. It can be argued that they did so because Muslims started the movement as religious and Sheikh Abdullah who tried to champion the cause of secularism remained very much rooted in religious perspective and used religion for political mobilization of Valley Muslims when needed.

However, at the same time it must stay in the view that non-Muslims did not protest against the harsh conditions and taxations and forced labour and several other such cruel policies of Maharaja System of which Muslims became the main target because of their deprived position and status. Therefore it was only logical that Muslim masses when could not bear the brunt of suppression and oppression cried out loud and said 'Allah O Akbar' (God is Greatest – not the rulers or whoever suppresses them). It is a fact that the first party was called 'Muslim Conference' but it never demanded Muslim State or Muslim rule in the state. Its demands centered on the rights for Muslims. Therefore, it was not a theocratic party but using today's terminology a 'community' party asking for socio-economic, political and cultural rights and reforms. Even after the party name was changed following numerous debates for several years to National Conference in 1939, the

participation of non-Muslims remained confined to such progressive liberals as Sardar Budh Singh and Prem Nath Bazaz etc. Therefore, communal approach to politics was never one sided or confined to any one religious community in Jammu and Kashmir State or the wider India for that matter.

As per Kashmiri identity it grew larger and stronger through the popular politics and had the Pakistani and Indian nationalisms not invaded the State and let it be independent, Kashmiri was going to be national identity of 'the Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha' as Indian is for the India (originating from Indus River) and Pakistani for Pakistan (originated in the word 'Pak' meaning pure and 'Stan' meaning land) and British for Britain (originating from Briton, one of many tribes).

However, Kashmir did not become an independent state. Rather it became divided under the military occupation of India and Pakistan. Regardless of what justification can be found for which forces and political ideologies or viewpoints in Kashmir, the years following the division proved that a sense of distinct identity from both India and Pakistan clearly existed amongst the State population. However, this sense for everyone and all the regions was NOT Kashmiri but Riyasati without any other name for this Riyasat. This was more so

in Jammu than in Kashmir and was not confined to Hindus. My grandparents generation used the term *Riyasat* and *Riyasati* in similar fashion as the national descriptions are commonly used. 'We', the *Riyasati* and 'They', Punjabis, Indians, British Indians or of '*Aungrezi Illaqa*', and so on. Within that there also existed a sense of being Kashmiri in national political terms and that became more clear and evident in the regions of Kashmir Valley and what is now 'Azad' Kashmir.

Here one important aspect needs to be noted. After the division and occupation of Kashmir, the 'nation-state- building process in J&K was made subdued to the Indian and Pakistani nationalisms and national identities. The political leadership in Kashmir at this stage represented in 'National' Conference and 'Muslim' Conference clearly gave up on the 'nation-state' idea but managed to secure some protections for the distinct state identity. Here the role of United Nations should also not be undermined. The pledges made by India and Pakistan at UN for a plebiscite in which Kashmiris will decide the future status of the state provided and protected this distinct space for Kashmiri identity.

On both sides of the division line Kashmir remains distinct from the rest of Indian or Pakistani states and provinces. Initially both Kashmirs had Prime Ministers and Presidents rather than Chief

Minister and Governor like other states and provinces of India and Pakistan. Later the autonomy of the Indian side of Kashmir got eroded gradually but in the Pakistani side autonomy actually has grown since the inception of Azad Kashmir in October 1947. It still has all the features of an independent nation state but of course not the powers and privileges of a nation-state.

Had the Indian and Pakistani rulers treated their occupied/administered/ controlled Kashmir fairly and with trust and not suppressed expressions of distinction and resistance to the hegemony as treason, perhaps both Kashmir had by now been integrated in the wider Indian and Pakistani structures. This of course did not happen and Kashmiris on both sides remained victims of the suspicion and skepticism of the Pakistani and Indian elites. This attitude of India and Pakistan also contributed in the development of a Kashmiri identity larger and wider than a cultural identity to counter the Indian and Pakistani nationalisms.

Scores of Kashmiri youth on both sides of the divide were politicized in relation to Kashmiri identity not in Kashmir but when went to stay for whatever purpose in India or Pakistan. This politicization had been and remains clearly coated with the layer of 'religious Islamic' rhetoric in IOK and with a 'nationalistic/progressive' one in POK.

Mainly because on the Pakistani side a kind of hegemony was attempted to be achieved through Islamic identity which recognizes only that notion of Pakistani identity which clearly places Punjabi and Urdu speaking elites at the top. This was challenged not only by Kashmiris but also progressive Punjabis, Bengalis, Pukhtoons, Sindhis and Baluchis and at one point Mohajirs also resorted to minority and 'separatist' politics. In 'Azad' Kashmir it was the pro-independence politics that had problem with the domination of Pakistani nationalistic politics in the name of Islam over Kashmir. Mainly because through this religious onslaught the goal of Pakistani elites was seen as roping Kashmir in the 'two nation theory' which of course meant to push non-Muslim Kashmiris away and divide Kashmir on communal lines for good. The Muslim Conference although initially never a communal party now did not have problem with this as long as their domestic power over AJK people was not taken away. The pro-independence politics in AJK initially was confined to a tiny pocket of those baradaris of Mirpur that are usually described by other baradaris as 'Kashmiri' baradaris and include mainly but not exclusively Khawajas and Ansaris. Their roots were in the Valley of Kashmir from where their forefathers were migrated at different stages of Kashmiri history due to a combination of factors including persecution, famines and plagues etc.

Hundreds of thousands of weavers left Valley due to suppression that followed the silk workers strikes in 1847 and 1866. (For details see Thorpe, R. 'Cashmere Misgovernment'). These families and some enlightened activists from other local baradaris such as Raja Akbar, Maulvi Abdullah Siakhvi, Maulvi Wahab Din along with Sardar Budh Singh, Master Roshan Lal etc. formed the most influential and active group of National Conference cadre in Mirpur before division of the State.

After division

In the early years after the division of Kashmir which resulted in mass exodus of non-Muslim population from 'Azad' Kashmir, the space for challenging governing party, the Muslim Conference and accession to Pakistan ideology was virtually nonexistent. Similarly as the views for accession to Pakistan or any deviation from Sheikh Abdullah and National Conference's version of secularism had no space available on the Indian occupied side.

The accession to Pakistan in IOK and independence in POK represented two forms of resistance across the division line that were briefly made to come together in the 1989 uprising but only uncomfortably. The accession to India was not traceable in POK then but things seemingly

changed significantly since 1990s. Since a detailed analysis that can't be offered here. Suffice to say that while the religious difference between Kashmiri Muslims and Indian State's Hindu identity shaped the identity of resistance against Indian occupation in IOK especially the Valley into a Muslim-Kashmiri uprising, the resistance in 'Azad' Kashmir against the interference and domination of Pakistani state in the name of Islam took more nationalistic and progressive shape with Kashmiri as a clearly secular and political national identity. A closer look would show that within this pro-independence politics in AJK there were mainly two traditions or forms. One that can be called ideologically progressive with socialist inclination demonstrated through different groupings of NSF and remains closely linked with Pakistani and International left. The other has grown in different forms and shapes of Plebiscite Front, the most popular of which is JKLF. It was the JKLF version of independence politics in AJK that joined hands with the pro Pakistani phenomenon in the Valley. NSF tradition had reservations. The NSF senior leadership that were no longer students and those who were still students along with other pro-independence groups closer to NSF ideology such as NLF (led by Shaukat Maqbool Bhatt) in AJK, opposed the JKLF actions in 1987 as blind adventurism and controlled by such Pakistani forces which were not

for the freedom of Kashmir but using Kashmiri sentiments to forward their 'accession' and agenda. The resistance forces in the IOK Valley did not have clue of these issues at the time when they were comfortably making deals with ISI through JKLF.

Prior to this both of these traditions of pro-independence politics in AJK worked together on certain issues. For example NSF supported NLF's Guerrilla operations in the leadership of Mohammed Maqbool Bhatt and opposed the PPP of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to make AJK as a province of Pakistan in 1970s. By mid 1980s Kashmir Peoples National Party was also formed by Barrister Qurban Ali after his return from UK. The party attracted some college lecturers and students mainly of NSF background. The PNP became very active for a short period of time before it was divided when its General Secretary Shaoukat Ali Kashmiri was accused of accepting funds from undeclared and allegedly from Indian sources which Shaukat denied but could not convince scrutiny committee resulting split in the party. Shaukat later formed his own group of PNP now known as United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP). The NSF later formed their own 'mass' party known as Jammu Kashmir National Awami Party (JKNAP). All of these groups opposed the JKLF led militancy in the Valley. However, they did

support the people of Valley in their struggle against the Indian occupation but with the caution that one enchained slave cannot unchain the other enchained slave. “Fight the occupation under which you live” became the new slogan of AJK nationalists and left.

Therefore, the resistance movement in the Valley against Indian Occupation and the resistance politics in AJK against Pakistani domination carry an ideological and political contradiction that surfaces at different levels of interaction between both sides mainly in ‘private space’ and now also on virtual or cyber space – the new site of interaction between Kashmiris across the world. The most challenging of all questions that in my view will determine the course of Kashmiri resistance politics is the understanding of Kashmiri identity by different political ideologies. As shown above the Kashmiri identity as a political national identity can be traced mainly amongst the people who now reside in the Valley and ‘Azad’ Kashmir and amongst the Kashmiri diaspora across the globe that primarily originates from these two regions of the divided state.

Even here the notion of being Kashmiri is different amongst the AJK ‘nationalists’ and ‘accessionists’. For the former it is a national political identity as of any nation-state and is in par with the Indian and Pakistani identities. For the later it is a

regional identity within the Indian (National Conference, Congress etc.) and Pakistani (Pakistan People's Party, Muslim League and Muslim Conference etc.) identities. There is also an issue around language. Some Kashmiris even pro-independence Kashmiris are of understanding that Kashmiri language spoken by the Valley people (although they call it Kashiri or Koshar) is the language of Kashmir (state) and should be learnt by all state subjects. This is the conception of Kashmiri identity that reminds one of the Pakistani policies of 'one unit' that tried to force Urdu as national language on the entire population resulted in the Bangla Basha Movement and eventually Bangladesh. The notion of 'Greater Kashmir' seems rooted in this Valley and Kashiri centric Kashmiri identity that is linguistic and cultural rather than a political identity constructed through the popular politics which produced the most popular political parties in Kashmiri history namely National and Muslim Conference.

This cultural and linguistic notion of Kashmiri identity is challenged by many Ladakhis, Jammuwals and Gilgitis-Baltis. However, grounds of challenges are different. The Ladakhis and Jummuwals challenge it on the grounds that Kashmiri means Kashiri speaking population of Kashmir Valley hence they don't share it. This

objection does not view Kashmiri as a national identity of the state because for them the national identity is Indian. Being part of Kashmiri identity in their view makes them sub identity of the Kashmiri identity which they view as a sub-identity of the Indian identity. But if they become linked directly with India and de-linked from Kashmir they can bypass Kashmiri and can directly approach, and be approached by the 'Centre,' and can get better deals regarding whatever issues facing them. Similar thinking has emerged in Gilgit and Baltistan where the national identity is viewed by many State Subjects as Pakistani identity. In G&B there are a significant numbers of those who would like to see a united Kashmir but would like it to be called Blore, Jammu and Kashmir (BJK).

Among Kashmiris in AJK and diaspora from AJK in UK, Europe, USA, Canada and Middle East, however, the sense of being Kashmiris has grown significantly since 1947 and Kashmiri is widely owned and asserted as national political identity. The uprising of 1980s has certainly strengthened this sense of being Kashmiri. However, it is also evident that this uprising contributed significantly in turning Kashmir away from 'national' and closer to 'Muslim' question. Subsequently, Kashmiri identity is now viewed by many as 'Muslim-Kashmiri' identity than national identity of all

State subjects. Although there is some space pointed out for the non-Muslim Kashmiris. Subsequently, the Kashmir issue is increasingly becoming an issue between Muslims and Non-Muslims of the Valley and has been increasingly linked with the 'two nation theory'. The opposition to the struggle against Indian occupation by Kashmir Pundits of Valley and Hindus of Jammu which a closer look reveals is rooted more in their communal association with the Indian state like some of those Kashmiri Muslims who are inclined towards Pakistan on religious grounds contributes in this religious or communal polarization in Kashmir.

In this context the progressive tradition of resistance politics around independent Kashmir for the construction of Kashmiri as national political and secular identity of the entire state is becoming marginalized by the proponents of Kashmir as Muslim question and Kashmiri as Muslim identity. Also because the vast majority of Kashmiris who spearheaded the progressive and secular tradition of politics in 1930 are since 1947 aligned with the Indian union and suppress the politics of independence. This is one of the reasons that this progressive and/or liberal space of Kashmiri politics remains invisible beyond 'Azad' Kashmir or to the inner circles of this politics among diaspora. Whereas in my view it is only this

version of Kashmiri politics and identity that provides space for all State Subjects to become part of one Kashmir that is not religious, linguistic or regional based identity but incorporates all regions, religions and languages of Kashmir as Kashmiri and articulates the struggle of all these people at South Asian as well as global level. This version has many challenges, which can be met only through a state wide political, intellectual and civil infrastructure.

The development of Pahari language in Britain

Background, Alphabet, Literature and People

This is an improvised version of the paper presented at Pahari Conference organized by the Aalmi Pahari adabi Sangat (APAS) in conjunction with Leeds City Council in Leeds led by Ali Adalat and Sajjad Raja.

Introduction

Pahari in this article is defined as the mother tongue of British Kashmiris originating from what is commonly known as 'Azad' Kashmir, the Pakistani controlled/ occupied/ administered (depending on one's political stance on Kashmir) part of the divided State of Kashmir. Pahari is one of the main spoken languages of 'Azad' Kashmir. Although there is a large Gojari community in Azad Kashmir, there is a strong tendency amongst Gojjars to speak Pahari in Azad Kashmir as well as in UK. I became aware of this tendency during the

running of 'Aapna' and 'KBC' TV channels when after several attempts could not find a presenters for our Gojari show. Does this trend indicate a sort of complex amongst Gojjars about their mother tongue in relation to Pahari as Paharis have it concerning Punjabi? This question needs further probing.

Another aspect of language consciousness and development trends that surfaced amongst the proponents of Pahari, Pothohari, Hindku, Dogri, Gojari (in the Indian controlled/ occupied/administered Kashmir) and Punjabi languages and needs further exploration is which are dialects and which are the languages. Punjabis would argue that Pahari, Pothohari, Dogri, Siraiki and Hindku are the dialects of Punjabi. Pothoharis would say that Pahari including Mirpuri and Hindku are the dialects of Pothohari and Pahari would claim that, Mirpuri, Pothohari, Dogri, Hindku are the dialects of Pahari. At the same time Poonchi would claim that the language spoken in 'Azad' Kashmir is Poonchi and not Pahari. This question of course is linked with the wider question of who decides which is a language and which is a dialect? One answer is the power – political struggle linked with status and/or class position and market. However, these questions cannot be discussed in the scope of this article. Suffice to say that exploring, debating and

understanding ones linguistic, cultural and political past for the development and enhancement of present and future is great but requires great care to avoid slipping back in the tribal past or linguistic nationalism, challenging the domination of some and dominating others. This can feed to suppressive tendencies and layers of oppression in different names and forms.

Attempt made here is to present the development of Pahari language from this perspective. Actually, as elaborated below it was this perspective in which the development work for Pahari-Pothohari – Hindku was initiated and articulated in UK. By the development work here I mean the process which I was a part of and not to claim that we were the only people who contributed in the development of this 'language with different names' or 'languages with great similarities' or as some people would say 'Aapni Zaban'.

The Numbers

Together Pahari, Pothohari and Hindku speakers are estimated over a million people in Britain today. Of these about 6 to 700,000 are Kashmiris from 'Azad' Kashmir and over 200,000 Pakistanis from Pothohar and Abaseen regions.

Some Personal Reflections

Pahari is one of the ancient most languages of South Asia. It is one of over two dozen languages spoken in the State of Jammu Kashmir. With almost all of the migration to Britain taking place from Pahari speaking areas of Kashmir, Pahari has also become one of the largest South Asian languages in Britain. Out of over three quarters of a million British Kashmiris only two hundred families originate from the Kashmir Valley with Kashiri or Koshur as their mother tongue. My interest in mother tongue that subsequently led me to be part of the fascinating process of alphabet development goes back to 1989 when I came to live in Britain from Mirpur 'Azad' Kashmir. A brief recollection of the personal journey seems appropriate here to understand the context in which the alphabet for Pahari and related linguistic groups has taken place.

It was in the summer of 1989 that I went to attend a community meeting at Green Hill Community Centre in Glodwick, Oldham. The meeting was to register protest against the murder of a mentally retarded child Tahir Akram originally from Poona in 'Azad' Kashmir. Tahir was shot at with an air gun from a car by a gang of white youth. I was moved to Britain for permanent settlement only a few months earlier and had little understanding of racism and antiracism related issues here.

However, since the hanging of Kashmiri revolutionary Mohammed Maqbool Bhatt by the Indian government at Tihar jail Delhi in 1984, I had developed a strong interest in the Kashmiri independence movement and through that in the wider resistance and progressive politics.

In the meeting several community leaders and activists spoke on the incident and racism in general and how to fight back. However, it was the contribution by two Asian men from the floor that attracted my attention and is relevant here. Both of the men in their mid-thirties appeared from their outlook as have lived in Britain all their lives, spoke in Pothohari.

Pothohari shares a great deal with Pahari and spoken in Pothohar region of Pakistani Punjab across the river Jhelum that flows as the border between Kashmir and Pakistan. This was the second time that I heard any other language than Urdu or English spoken in a public meeting. First time was in mid 1980s when I was in Britain for a short period during term break from Karachi University. The occasion was Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front's annual convention and the venue another northern town of Britain – Rochdale. Here Younis Taryaby, a veteran British Kashmiri revolutionary activist spoke in Pahari while over a dozen other contributors delivered fiery speeches in Urdu.

After the Tahir Akram meeting I approached the two Pothohari speakers. They were Tariq and Jaleel who were also selling a magazine called Pekar; the struggle, an organ of the 'Pakistani Workers Association; (PWA). I bought a copy of Pekar and exchanged contact details with Tariq and Jaleel. Since then I became a regular visitor at Tariq's House in Manchester.

Later I found out that Taryaby, Tariq, Jaleel and many other Pakistani, Indian and Kashmiri progressive and revolutionaries belonged to the same tradition of Left and anti-racist politics in Britain and worked together for years in the Indian Workers Association (IWA) before the formation of Pakistani Workers Association and Kashmiri Workers Association (KWA) in late 1970s.

The Background

It was during one of my visits at his house that Tariq raised the idea of writing in our mother tongues. He pointed out and I agreed that there is a deep rooted inferiority complex amongst the peoples of Pothohar and (Azad) Kashmir regarding their mother tongue. In Britain two third of the 'Pakistanis' are actually Kashmiris originating from the Pakistani Controlled Kashmir and speak Pahari. Around one hundred thousand Pakistanis are from Pothohar. He argued that one of the main reasons for the lack of confidence lies in the fact

that our languages are not written hence considered worthless. For Tariq the purpose of writing in our languages was not merely to preserve the language but also to help millions of people to get out of the state of illiteracy. He often said 'majority of the Pothohari and Pahari speakers are regarded illiterate in Pakistan and Kashmir respectively because they cannot read Urdu. But being Muslims majority can read Arabic, the language of Quran. But they do not understand it. On the other hand they do have a language, Pahari-Pothwari that they can understand but cannot read because it is not written. If we can write the language chances are that many of our people will be able to read and understand one language and will become literate'

I fully agreed with Tariq but despite a keen interest in literature particularly Urdu literature I had little understanding of the linguistics. It might appear odd but prior to that I never thought about the processes of birth and development of languages. I cannot trace the source of this understanding but I used to think that written languages were there in written form from god knows how long and those that were unwritten are destined to remain so.

Tariq cited many examples from our own history when people wrote their mother tongue particularly the letters they wrote back while away

from home. I was aware of this tradition of writing letters in poetic form in our mother tongue. Tariq also had a far greater and deeper knowledge and understanding of the languages and the age of several languages across the world i.e. Bosque, Pushto, Urdu, and English and so on. What convinced me that we can write in our language was the development of Urdu software. Although not as advanced as English software, the use of Surkhab and Sadaf (Urdu packages) at Oldham Resource and Information Centre (ORIC) – now Voluntary Action Oldham (VAO) as a volunteer enabled me to grasp Tariq's arguments. In 1990s we decided to produce a magazine in our mother tongue.

What is in a Name?

The next crucial questions we discussed included the name of the language, the name of the Magazine and the alphabet we are going to use. Regarding the first question we made the list of names used by people to describe the language. In Pakistan majority of the Pothohari speakers called it Pothohari but many insisted that it was Punjabi. Since it was only after meeting Tariq that I started thinking about the linguistic issues regarding my mother tongue I was not sure what names were used for it in Kashmir? I personally thought of it

as very much like Pothohari but when I asked friends and family some said it is Punjabi, others called it Pahari and still others argued that it was Dogri. At this point as I can recall now, the excitement of being part of something this fascinating overshadowed the concerns about the name. So I went along with the argument that in the editorial of our first issue we will mention all of these names. After all it is up to people what they call it and if they have different names due to historical conditions and political situations then that is fine.

In terms of the name for Magazine we agreed that 'Chitka' would be a perfect name for the first ever magazine in our language. Chitka is a typical Pahari term used to describe the morning sunshine of the winter sun. I came up with this name during routine discussions with Tariq by travelling back to my childhood in 'Mohara Loharaan' where in the morning many of us village boys used to get together outside of Aji (respected bava) Ali Ahmed's house at the top end of our village before starting to walk for school. In the cold winter mornings the warmth of sun rising above the hills of 'Pirgalee' (gap or street between high mountains) felt very pleasant. Chitka was the single word used to describe this warm winter sun. Tariq liked this name because as he said 'it gives the message of warmth as well as of light and that

is what exactly what we are after – the light in the darkness that has engulfed our lives, countries, peoples and histories'.

Once agreed on the name we spent many more days on the alphabet. We already agreed that Arabic alphabet used for Persian, Urdu and many other 'regional' languages in Pakistan and Kashmir is the most appropriate available alphabet but there was one problem with what was available. By now we have several other friends from British Kashmiri and Pakistani communities joined in the process including Asad Zia, Muneer Akhtar, Abid Hussain Hashmi, Adalt Ali, Haji Khaliq Hussain, Mohammed Arshad and Raja Anwar Fazal and Iftikhar Kiani. Several academics' including Dr Roger Ballard, also participated in many formal and informal discussions and helped us with linguistic, sociological and political aspects of the language development. From Pakistan Akhtar Imam Rizvi, a retired Pakistan Radio Director who spent most of his life in promoting Pothohari language and Bava Fazal Husain Rana, a veteran Pahari and Gojari writer from (azad) Kashmir were specially invited by Chitka Committee Britain to help with developing and formalizing the alphabet.

One point of greater importance we all agreed upon was that while it is likely that several magazines and books will be published in and by the writers from several mutually conversable

languages in Pakistan and Kashmir, we will actively encourage all writers to use the same alphabet. To a large extent this has happened and this alphabet is being used in Pothohari, Pahari, Gojari and Hindku languages in Pakistan, Kashmir and amongst the diaspora communities.

ALIF BAY: The Alphabets

The issue of alphabet was not of inventing something completely new. Most of the letters from Arabic based languages were readily available for writing in our language. However, there were two sounds frequently used in Pahari-Pothwari for which no letters were available either in Arabic, Urdu or Persian. Also there were letters in these languages (Persian, Arabic and Urdu) with hardly any use in our language. The later issue of extra letters we tried to resolve by writing phonetically. For example using 'Ttey' for all T sounds rather than using both 'Toya' and Ttey. Similarly using 'Zey' for all 'Z' sounds instead of using 'Zaal', 'Zuaad' and Zoya'. Same with 'Hey, Halvey aali and 'Hey' ik and do akkiyaan aali as well as 'Eein'. This approach was seen as advantageous particularly for those in Britain who have not learnt Urdu through schooling in South Asia but through informal interaction with Urdu or Arabic. However, after discussing this issue further and wider it was

agreed that it is a question of personal preferences. Currently some write using different letters with same sounds and others using just one letter.

However, the issue of non-availability of the required letters in existing Arabic, Urdu and Persian alphabet was more pressing and complex. The two sounds in our language for which letters were not available included 'Dohrri' or double 'Hehey' and 'noon' with 'rraan' sound. The examples of double 'hehey' sound include 'Kahahar' (home), Kohohrri' (Horse) 'Pahahvi' (sister in law as in brothers wife) and so on. The examples for the 'noon' and 'rraan' include 'Kkhanna' (eat) 'Peenna' (drink), 'Behenna' (sit) 'Pehehnn' (sister) etc.

For the Dohrri or double Hehey we invented a letter by combining existing two 'hays' used in Urdu, the 'ik akkhi hey' and the 'do akkhi hey'. In the new alphabet it reads as 'Dohrri hehey'.

For 'noon' and 'rraan' we invented a new letter by combining 'Toya' from 'Rrey' (Rr sound) and 'Noon' (N sound) and write it like existing 'Noon' with 'small Toya on the top of its 'Nukhta' (point). It reads 'Rroon' in the new alphabet. We also added 'Oon' letter by putting 'Pehesh' on existing 'Noon Ghunna' and 'Yee' letter by adding 'Alif Mahda' on existing 'yee' or 'Nikki Yeh' and 'Bari Yeh'.

The first Chitka was produced in 1991 consisting only of four A4 sides. Gone through the full circle of education from class one to MA where Urdu and English were used as the only written languages, I found it extremely hard to think in mother tongue while writing. But this was an extremely pleasant and joyful experience. We wrote, read and laughed for hours over our own writings. Initially every other word in my writing was of Urdu. However, it did not take long to connect thinking process with this 'new' language that I spoke all my life but never thought about writing it. It felt like I was looking at the culture which I lived and grown up in through the window of language for the first time.

The response from people in Britain, Kashmir and Pakistan was very positive and encouraging. I felt really great when several women in my extended family (that extends from Glasgow to London and in Mirpur) who could only read Quran told that they were able to read and enjoyed it. Khala Azizi of Derby is one such example and the other example is Ali Adalat's wife Mrs Janat Ali. She read a story in Chitka and subsequently Adalat who initially opposed the writing of our language as an impossible task and distraction from Kashmir movement began writing fiction and with publication of his 'Poonch Na Sarmad' (The Chief of Poonch) became the first British Kashmiri

Pahari author of a shorty story book. In the coming years he was to write' Taharaan Ni Agg' (the fire in the mountain range) another collection of short stories followed by 'Mehla Aasman' (the dirty sky) the first Pahari Novel.

We were not alone

On 4th October 1999 Asian Literary Forum (ALF) Oldham organised a Kashmir Culture Day at Queen Elizabeth Hall as part of the celebrations of 150th years of Oldham Borough Council. By now Adalat Ali's 'Poonch Na Sarmad' was reached not only to the 'Azad' Kashmir (Pakistani Controlled Kashmir) but also crossed on to the Indian Controlled Kashmir. From there Zafar Minhas contacted Adalat and told him about the work done on Pahari literature. We invited Zafar as a special guest to the Oldham Kashmir Cultural Day. Zafar's contribution on the day was very emotional as it was for the first time that a Pahari speaking Kashmiri from one part of Kashmir was speaking to those from the other part after 52 years of division and separation and that too outside of Kashmir. Zafar brought copies of Sheraza (binding; unity) a Pahari magazine in publication since 1982 along with his book of short stories 'Chchamber' (water fall) and Shams Barri (name of a mountain in Kashmir), a magazine for the promotion of Pahari literature.

Zafar told us about the Pahari Academy set up by the Indian Controlled Kashmir government as part of the Kashmiri Academy of Arts, Languages and Cultures that initiated magazines in several Kashmiri languages. He was fascinated by the work on alphabet done in Britain and agreed that on his return he will encourage the writers in that part of Kashmir to use the same.

By the end of 20th century that alphabet became fully functional but one problem that made production of literature difficult was the lack of computer software with the additional letters. While the Urdu software 'Inpage' was sufficient to write in our language but it did not have the facility to write 'Roon'. So we had to insert 'Toya' of roon by hand on the printed copies. This was a painstaking task. The issue has partially been resolved by the development of a true type font in Unicode by a transnational project. No longer we need to do 'Toyas' manually. Another revolutionary development came out of this project is the transliteration between Gurmukhi and Shahmuki or Arabic based scripts by the single press of a button. For more information on this fascinating development please go to www.prestons.ac.uk/platt. However, the problem with this program is that at present it does not have the 'Nastaleeq' font that is considered the most beautiful of all fonts used for Arabic based

languages and is widely used for Urdu magazines and newspapers.

The Literature and other developments

The literature that the Chitka movement has given birth to has grown significantly since the first issue of Chitka in 1991. Today we have two short stories books, three bilingual books for children, one novel, one collection of short stories, numerous poetry books and of course 7 issues of Chitka.

The movement also inspired, encouraged and supported the production of Chitka Millennium Number from Mirpur in Pakistani Controlled Kashmir. The copies of Millennium Chitka produced by the 'Alami Pahari Adabi Sangat (International Pahari Literary Society, www.pahari.org) led by Dr Mohsin Shakeel are available across Britain and includes highly valuable reference material on Pahari language including the Pahari version of this article. Across the border in Pothohar a monthly magazine called 'Sangi' by Parala Publishers headed by Mehmood and Mirza Mehmood produced 11 Issues with the current circulation of over 10,000 copies.

The use of Pahari has also become more common on radio with BBC Asian Network broadcasting two hourly program two evenings a week, Asian Sound Manchester three hours and Fiza Radio

Nottingham two hours. Radio Excel in Midland has virtually become Pahari radio and gives wide coverage to Pahari and Pothohari music. A significant increase in advertisement in Pahari is also evident on various Asian radios including Sunrise Radio Bradford that is now linked with Mirpur Radio.

Aapna: the first Kashmiri satellite TV channel

The story of first ever independent Kashmiri television channel cannot be told here in full. So only main aspects and that too relevant to the language development are narrated below with a very brief background.

It was 2005 that some British Kashmiri activists met at 41 Lamington Street Bradford the residence of Mehmood Kashmiri, head of Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (JKNLF) and very vocal campaigner for independent Kashmir movement. Included amongst them were Mushtaq Hussain of NLF, Azmat A Khan and Saghir Hussain of JKLF, Saeed Hussain (KWA) Abid Hussain Hashmi (Association of British Kashmiris ABK), Adalat Ali (Kashmir National Identity Campaign, KNIC), Asad Zia (JKLF/ABK), and this writer. It was more a gathering of political friends than a formal meeting of the members of different political groups. However, the discussion that took place was

serious and formal. The focus of the discussion was to critically review the previous twenty years in light of achievements and failures and explore future possibilities and opportunities. After several rounds of passionate and at times heated exchange of views, it was agreed that the people present and those out there who share the dream of independence in Kashmir and recognition in UK lack any meaningful medium to reach out to the wider public.

Since the Urdu media in Britain is controlled by 'anti-Kashmiri Independence' Pakistanis who mis inform and exploit Kashmiri leaders and the community in general and block any issues that they think will hit their vested interests in UK and Azad Kashmir. One example that became the central point of resentment and frustration for many British Kashmiris was the blocking of a series of commercial advertisements arranged by the Kashmir National Identity Campaign regarding the 2001 census in which readers of the Urdu Daily 'Jang' (war) were asked to 'tick other' and 'write in Kashmiri' under the ethnic question in the census forms. We learnt from our sources that the editor stopped the advertisement at the last minute saying that if Kashmiris got recognized in Britain how many Pakistanis will be left? So don't promote this Kashmiri Identity Campaign. Everyone present agreed that unless we have our

own media majority of our people will remain unaware of what we do.

Following the above meeting Asad Zia and this writer met few times and discussed the idea of a satellite television channel. The idea of a television channel was equally fascinating as Chitka Magazine.

I had very little knowledge about the technical side of a television channel. My strength was some awareness about the history, politics, culture, aspirations, expectations and problems of 'Aapney (our) people' and 'Aapni' society. After Asad explained in very simple terms the technical requirements for setting up a television channel, I could see it happening. He was not very clear about the contents as to what sort of programs can be broadcasted and for how long etc. During our meetings that followed he convinced me of technical viability and I assured him that we will never be short on content. Skipping all the details about our search for investment and building a team I will fast forward to 12th June 2006.

I was sitting on the roof of a prestigious Aapna Studio in Mirpur Azad Kashmir located few hundred yards up the Fazal Chowk. Other present were Aamer Sohil, Studio in-charge for Mirpur who along with Tanveer Hussain, the studio engineer set up the system to receive signal from Satellite.

Dr Mohsin Shakeel, Head of Alami Pahari Adabi Sangat, Dr Abdul Rehman, my uncle and keen supporter of the channel, Tanveer Shah, Studio Engineer, Zulfiqar, cameraman, Adnan office boy and some other staff members whose name I can't recall. In the surrounding hundreds of lights were twinkling from the darkness that covered Mirpur city. At about 9 o clock that evening the screen of small TV set on the roof of Mirpur studio lit up and the voice risen from it of some anonymous singer singing 'Awal Hamad Sana Elahee Jo Malik Har Har da' (First of all praise to the God who owns each and everything) mesmerized all present. We could not believe it. I personally felt proud of being part of this historical process. However, we all remembered our friends in Britain who were behind this what appeared as a new dawn for Kashmir and Kashmiris as well as for Pothoharis, Hindku and Pushtu speaking Pakistanis. It was no way possible without Asad Zia who had a dream and led the way in making it reality. I remembered Hafiz Abdul Qayum who came up with investment idea when all other possibilities of investment did not materialize. Abid Hussain Hashmi who's soothing and supportive presence helped us through very pressing and depressing times.

Aapna Channel was broadcasted from 12th June 2006 to 30th March 2007. Millions upon millions Kashmiris and Hindku and Pothwari speaking

Pakistanis and Punjabis from India watched and appreciated the channel. Indeed it became more than a TV channel for a million strong Kashmiri diaspora in UK. It became part of almost every household in UK. Not only the Pahari but also Pothwari, Hindku and Pushtu languages and communities found voice in Aapna and came forward to support the channel. In addition it connected millions of Kashmiris and other communities across the globe. It became their new 'home'. Later on Shafaq Hussain also joined in and Sajid Yousaf and Mohammed Rasab also became part of the channel at a very crucial time. Haji Barkat sb, Javed Akhtar Beda, Younis sb, Saidzada Noor Hussain and Haji Akram sb all came forward to support their channel.

Najib Afsar also made efforts to be on board. The investigative documentaries 'Rachiyal Reports' by Arshad Rachiyal on such issues as fake Begging, Milk and Blood along with fake herbalists and crude exploitation of bonded labour in brick industry (kilns or Pattheys) gave the channel a whole new dimension and popularity.

In programming and especially in arranging guests and being part of the debate Zafar Tanveer was always a guiding force. Studios were later also built in Rawalpindi and bases in Jammu, Srinagar and Birmingham. But then suddenly 'Aapna' collapsed leaving people in a state of shock. In one

sentence the causes can be explored in the lack of leadership and management capacities along with agency phobias.

KBC: another missed Opportunity

What happened to 'Aapna' and what happened between Aapna and KBC are the chapters of this story that can't be told here. KBC was bought some time in April by Najib Afsar through this writer with Arshad Rachiyal, Ishaq Poonvi, Abid Zaman, Hafiz Abdul Qayum and Abid Hussain as part of the team. Options for Shafaq were left open. Altaf Masoodi and Shiv Dutt and Himanshu Sharma had been actively supporting Aapna as well as KBC through quality programming about and from IOK. The KBC directors' team was later joined in by Ali Adalat and Sajid Yousaf. Many staff from Aapna including most of the presenters joined in and KBC became the new 'Aapna'. At the same time Zafar Tanveer and Asad Zia started 'Aap' channel which was for Azad Kashmir Abaseen and Pothwari communities. KBC too collapsed when it was thriving in every sense of the world. The limitations in leadership and management capacity combined with certain phobias in my view caused what some friends describe as the 'failiure of successful' Pahari

Kashmiri television channel in UK the second time. AAP went down even before the KBC.

Pahari-Pothoari Films

'Miki Kharo England' (take me to England) by Arshad Chaal was the first amongst a range of Pahari- Pothohari telefils produced by various production houses in Pothohar and Azad Kashmir for the British market. They became very popular amongst the viewers of Azad Kashmiri and Pothohari backgrounds among diaspora not only in UK but also in Middle East.

However, the serious films in Pahari Pothohari were to be made by Ali Adalat and Tariq Mehmood of Chitka tradition. Tariq made Pahee Adha (the brother half) based on the folk story of same name and Ali Adalat wrote Lakeer that's a story of the divided families in Jammu Kashmir state's Pahari regions. The film was produced by Shiv Dutt in Jammu where it is showing in the local theatre for over two months now.

Future Prospects

With the softening of borders between the divided state of Kashmir and growing availability of internet technology combined with the growth and establishment of the British Kashmiri and Pothohari and Hindku communities (99.9% of over half a million British Kashmiris speak Pahari as

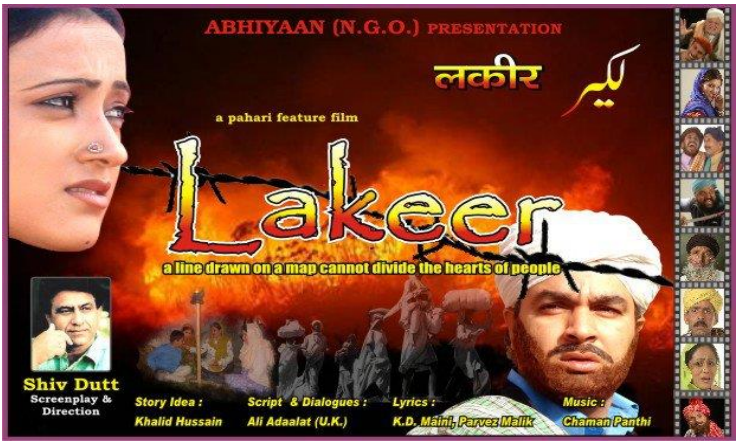
their mother tongue along with an estimated of over two hundred thousand Pothoharis and Hindku communities) and the new enthusiasm amongst Kashmiris across the division line about writing their languages, the future of the Pahari, Pothohari and other 'silenced' languages seems very optimistic at least in electronic media.

Print media seems struggling. The Chitka has been stopped publishing from UK. Has not published from Mirpur after the millennium number. The Sangi was closed down after about 20 issues. However, Pahari-Pothwari and Hindku programs and advertisements on Radios are consistently growing. The new addition to radio world is the Crescent Radio Rochdale that gives special attention to Pahari languages. The Mashaal radio during Ramzan run by MH Mehboob also gives some time to shows in Pahari.

One of the most significant developments is that for the first time language question is also asked in Britain for the census 2011 where Pahari. Pothwari and Hindko speaking population can write in their languages and for the first time figures will become available about these languages in UK. Of course there is strong likelihood that there will be a big gap between actual speakers of Pahari and those who will write in Pahari because many still think their language

is Urdu, or Punjabi but at least we will have some statistical data to work with.

Bava ji Akhtar Imam Rizvi (late) once said that plant of our language has budded miles away from its soil. That is true as for the writing of Pahari and Pothwari and Hindku is concerned. However, the further development of our languages depends on the practical support it receives from the relevant governments and people in Kashmir, Pakistan and India as well as in Britain so the the writers can write and the readers have a lot to read.


ABHIYAAN (N.G.O.) PRESENTATION
लकीर
لکیر
a pahari feature film
Lakeer
a line drawn on a map cannot divide the hearts of people
Shiv Dutt
Screenplay & Direction
Story Idea : Khalid Hussain
Script & Dialogues : Ali Adaalat (U.K.)
Lyrics : K.D. Maini, Parvez Malik
Music : Chaman Panthi

Pahari film Lakeer which after successful showings in Jammu is expected to be released soon in AJK and UK.

Kashmir Question: A Kashmiri Perspective

This House Believes …

This article was written for circulation amongst the audience of a debate on Kashmir on Saturday 15th May 2010 organised by the Pakistani society in Al Jaber Auditorium of Oxford University, one of the most prestigious British academic institutions. Titled,*"This House Believes That Kashmir is an Integral Part of Pakistan'*, the proposition was opposed by the Indian Society with the claims that Kashmir is an Integral Part of India. Each side had three speakers speaking for 8 minutes each. Renowned historian on Kashmir Victoria Schofield chaired the event. The missing of Kashmiri perspective was clearly acknowledged in the invitation of the event as 'the third most important viewpoint' that could not be incorporated in the

proposition due to difficulties in agreeing upon a motion.

I am thankful to Wahid Kashir from Reading (originally from Dadyal Azad Kashmir) who was able to participate in the debate along with some other Kashmiris and circulated 100 copies of the article.

The article swiftly browses through the claims made by the India and Pakistan over Kashmir and touches upon some of the main features of what can be claimed as a Kashmiri Perspective. The primary aim of this article is to inform of this Kashmiri perspective to anyone interested in the issue of Kashmir including the oxford university students attending the debate.

Is Kashmir an Integral Part of Pakistan or India?

The very fact that students originating from the two South Asian countries that claim Kashmir debating 'who Kashmir belongs to' shows that at present the former princely state does not form part of any. For if it did then there would not have been any need to have this debate. However, at the same time the fact that the belonging and ownership of Kashmir is debated points towards the existence of a dispute.

The students of Pakistani and Indian societies are debating the claims of their countries of origin here because the perspectives on Kashmir of the Indian and Pakistani generations of these students and their parents have been formulated and shaped by the 'official' and 'national' discourse on Kashmir transmitted and constructed into national rhetoric by the respective establishments through state owned and/or controlled mediums of opinion building including educational curriculum and print and electronic media till recently. Of course it also shows that they are interested in human issues and wish to resolve this issue for the betterment of the people in their respective countries and beyond.

Coming back to the claims of the two governments over Kashmir, they are rooted mainly in colonial history, the UN resolutions and such factors as the geographical proximity, cultural affinities and religious associations of the state people. I will elaborate only on the Colonial and International aspects of the 'Integral part debate' here. For as per the geographic proximity and cultural ties are concerned so many countries in the world share that. The starkest example of that are the Middle Eastern countries that share everything from religion to language and geography but remain politically independent and sovereign nation-states.

Colonialism: British and Princely India

It was indeed the East India Company that laid the foundations of this distinct political entity on 16th March 1846. On this day the Company handed over for ever in the independent possession of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his male body heirs all the territories that were officially named as 'The State of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet Ha' (or sometimes Frontier *Illaqas* (areas)) but have since become commonly known as Kashmir or Kashmir state.

Since the Company emerged as the main power and about a decade later was taken over by the British Crown, it became (at least at the ruling levels) the source of legislation, use of force, enforcement of decisions and political demarcations.

In this context the boundaries of the State of Jammu and Kashmir were drawn and the sovereignty of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his heirs was recognised by the British and accepted by the neighbouring states including Punjab from whose occupation British took the territories of Kashmir state and handed over to Maharaja Gulab Singh.

Gulab Singh and three of his generations ruled Kashmir till the invasion of India and Pakistan in October 1947. The contesting claims regarding who invaded first and with what motives have

been debated for all these years. Once again the official discourse of India and Pakistan renders the 'other' as responsible for the Kashmir problem and problems in Kashmir while claiming the entire Kashmir state as their integral part.

Before the departure of British, Kashmir formed a princely state with full internal autonomy of course not without some bumps and disagreements. Nevertheless legally no other state power or authority had any jurisdiction over the 84,000 sq. Miles of territory and its population – the State Subjects. The Kashmir state like more than 500 other states of various sizes and magnitudes did NOT form a part of the British India. It was a constituent part of the Princely India.

The mechanism formulated by the departing British Colonial rulers to grant freedom to the peoples of British and Princely India was not one and the same. The principle of Muslim majority forming Pakistan applied only and solely to the areas under direct rule of British known as British India. Over 560 princely states of which Kashmir was one of the largest became independent under the following clause (b) of the Act.

"the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses, and with it, all treaties and agreements in force at the date of the passing of

this Act between His Majesty and the rulers of Indian States, all functions exercisable by His Majesty at that date with respect to Indian States, all obligations of His Majesty existing at that date towards Indian States or the rulers thereof, and all powers, rights, authority or jurisdiction exercisable by His Majesty at that date in or in relation to Indian States by treaty, grant, usage, sufferance or otherwise;"

In a press conference on 4th June 1947 Mountbatten the last Viceroy presented the status and destination of the states in the following framework:

1. Indian States were independent in treaty relations with Britain
2. On 15 August 1947 the paramountancy of British crown was to lapse
3. Consequently the princely states would assume independent status
4. The states would be free to choose one or other constituent assembly.[ii]

While it is also evident from history that Mountbatten advised Maharaja of Kashmir to not opt for independence it must be noted this advice was not constitutionally obligatory or legally binding for the Maharaja of Kashmir.

Several smaller states joined India or Pakistan but there were some who did not choose the course prescribed by Mountbatten etc. Hyderabad for example, aspired for independence where a Muslim ruler ruled majority of non-Muslim population and the Muslim ruler of Jonagarh acceded to Pakistan despite its non Muslim majority population.

In this context had Hari Singh, the last Maharaja of Kashmir, decided to go with India there would not been a valid reason for Pakistan to challenge that, at least legally. For according to the stated policy of Muslim League the state rulers had the right to decide the future of their states. However, Kashmiri Maharaja did not opt for India or Pakistan. He decided to remain independent and on 12th August 1947 he sent a telegram to the rulers (to be) of India and Pakistan offering stand till agreement which meant continuation of the existing arrangements between Kashmir state and the British India (now India and Pakistan). While Pakistan accepted the offer, India asked time for further considerations. As alluded above there are contested claims about the invasion in Kashmir and what drove the Indian and Pakistani civil militants of Jan Sang and Tribals groups followed by regular armies to attack the state. Pakistan claims that the Muslim population revolted against maharaja and tribals went to help their

endangered Muslim brethren while India argues that Kashmiri ruler invited India for help that was sent only after Hari Singh signed the accession document. India also claims that on the basis of this document Kashmir became the integral part of the Indian Union. This claims is then blended in the Indian official discourse through politicised myths, heritage and history which 'proves' that Kashmir has always been a natural hence integral part and the 'crown of the secular body' of India.

Pakistan on the other hand has primarily built its case on 'two Nation Theory' and the UN resolutions. The two nation theory was a term coined to mean the partition of the British India on the basis of Muslim majority areas becoming Pakistan. Since this principle was applicable solely and exclusively to the British India of which Kashmir was not a part in any sense of the world the Pakistani claims on Kashmir on these bases have no legal status.

United Nations and Kashmir

The case of Kashmir was taken to UN by the Indian government on 1st January 1948. Interestingly, the issue was initially registered as that of 'situation in Kashmir'[iii] but then gradually changed into 'dispute over Kashmir'[iv] between India and Pakistan. Similarly, the question of the political future of Kashmir also went through

changes while under discussion at UN. Initially, it was described as an issue of 'accession' but then of 'future status' and back to 'accession'[v].

The details of the deliberations were summarised in the first resolution of UN Commission for India and Pakistan passed on 13th August 1948. In addition to agreeing on ceasefire, this resolution asks Pakistan to take all of her civilians and military personnel and non resident Pakistanis out of Kashmir before India was to withdraw a bulk of her armies after which Kashmiris will decide the future of the state through a plebiscite. The pro independence Kashmiris claim that the choice for deciding their future status in 13th August Resolution of the UN commission was reduced to the accession of state in the next UNCIP resolution on 5th January 1949 at the request of Pakistani government.

This plebiscite never happened. Pakistan claims that India did not withdraw her armies and India argues that withdrawal of her armies was to follow the withdrawal of Pakistan armies that never happened. However, gradually Indian argument changed into the claim that after the accession of Hari Singh followed by the rectification by the Kashmir Assembly headed by the National Conference, Kashmir became integral part of India. Why then India took Kashmir case to UN and accepted to withdraw its armies and have a

plebiscite for Kashmiris to decide the future of Kashmir? This question is rarely asked and never answered by the proponents of the Indian perspective. Some BJP activists however dismiss the entire UN exercise as a blunder by the socialist Nehru. However, given that Indian government from day one was a democratic setup blaming one person does not make much sense.

The Kashmiri Perspective

Both of the above discourses dominated the internal Kashmiri political landscape across the division line for some years after the division of the state. A Majority of the people supporting National Conference on one side and Muslim Conference on the other (at least in the Indian occupied Valley and the Pakistani occupied 'Azad ' (free) Kashmir) waited with great optimism for the International community to make Indian and Pakistani rulers to give Kashmiris the right to determine their future. However, after clashes between the aspirations of Kashmiris for independence and of the Indian and Pakistani rulers for accession as early as 1953 when Indian government deposed the head of Kashmiri Government in IOK (Sheikh Abdullah) and Pakistani government did the same in POK (Sardar Ibrahim), the optimism began to give way to scepticism and resentment. By the late 1960s the aspirations were evolved into the language of national liberation personified in one Maqbool

Bhatt. In late 1960s Maqbool Bhatt, 29, denounced the UN as a club of the ruling classes whose decisions reflected the class and national interests of the ruling layers of the big and powerful nations of the world. He was born in a village of Kashmir Valley, educated in Peshawar and emerged as the most attractive voice for the younger generation of Kashmiris in Mirpur where anti-Mangla Dam Construction Campaign paved the way for Plebiscite Front which he joined before choosing the path of armed struggle in 1968. While Pakistan imprisoned and tortured Maqbool Bhatt and his associates and India executed him on 11th February 1984, the world remained almost indifferent to this largely peaceful resistance with Ganga Hijacking and Killing of Indian diplomat in Birmingham as two exceptions. By 1980s the politics of resistance however had become a reality that could no longer be ignored on either side of the division line in Kashmir. But this reality was not the one and same across the divide. It was composed of different components some of which were to be contesting and competing with each other. For example Islamic rhetoric emerged as the defining factor in the resistance against the Indian occupation in IOK whereas the politics of independence in POK is clearly expressed through the nationalist and socialistic rhetoric. The situation presented a similar scenario that existed in the united Kashmir in 1940s when the National

Conference and Muslim Conference, the then resistance forces, became divided as the torch bearer of secularism and Islam respectively. Having said that one must not overlook the changes recently surfacing in the 'mainstream' Kashmiri politics on both sides of the division. Although forced to operate within the Indian and Pakistani constitutional framework, a significant shift can be noted towards greater autonomy that irritates the extremist religious forces in the Indian and Pakistani nationalist discourse which brand even these autonomy voices as 'separatists'. The JKPDF's 'self governance' and JKNC's greater autonomy demands along with that of AJKPML and AJK Muslim Conference's rhetoric of being 'Riyasati' Parties are only few examples.

Generally speaking, the independence politics has grown stronger in all parts of Kashmir especially in the Valley, AJK and Gilgit Baltistan as well as amongst the diaspora Kashmiris despite constant bullying, harassment, suppression and oppression of the Indian and Pakistani states and 'almost' indifference of the international community.

Today, the Kashmiri perspective on Kashmir can be summarised as follow:

1. The state was formed through the Amritsar Treaty that handed over forever in the

INDEPENDENT POSSESSION of Maharaja Gulab Singh and his male body heirs.

2. Maharaja Gulab Sing became the sovereign and ruled the state as such for over a century.
3. In response to the State for State people Movement, the Maharaja brought about the State Subject legislation in 1920s that defined citizenship of the state separate and away from British India (later Pakistan and India);
4. Responding to the popular politics of 1930s, the Kashmiri monarchy agreed to initiate modern democratic set up by holding multiparty elections for the first (partially) elected legislative assembly through limited franchise in 1934;
5. The leadership of two major and most popular Kashmiri parties of National Conference and Muslim Conference was reached to an agreement for further reforms in the governance in Kashmir by introducing multiparty government to be elected through one person one vote system with Maharaja to be remained as the figure head;
6. States had the legal and constitutional right to remain independent
7. Maharaja of Kashmir decided to remain independent according to the provisions in

the British Indian declaration for the princely states;

8. Maharaja asked the Indian and Pakistani governments for a standstill agreement for peace and progress
9. Accession with India was conditional and temporal linked with peace to be restored before people deciding on the future of the state;
10. The case of Kashmir was taken to UN by the Indian government two months after the accession by Maharaja of Kashmir with India;
11. The first resolution by the UN Commission on 13th August 1948 recognised the unfettered right of Kashmiri citizens (the state subjects) to self-determination including and with the right to independence;
12. The presence of both India and Pakistan in all its civil and military forms has become illegal after they failed to fulfil their legal responsibilities of protecting rights of Kashmiri citizens, withdrawal of their forces and have the future of Kashmir determined through a fair and democratic plebiscite ;
13. Under their illegal occupation, both India and Pakistan while hold some form of elections but without the participation of pro independence Kashmiris rendering the

democratic looking process undemocratic and in fact colonial like;

14. While there are voices in some parts of Kashmir that disassociate themselves from the Kashmiri identity because they claim that it has become synonymous to the valley or Islam and there are voices within the resistance movement with exclusionist agenda , this situation is not peculiar to Kashmir. Almost all countries of the world with multiple identities (nations-states) face this challenge including India, Pakistan and Britain. Majority of pro-independence Kashmiris accept the diversity argument but they denounce the official discourse of India and Pakistan which rejects the independent Kashmir demands because of the multiple and pluralist nature of the Kashmiri state and society as irrelevant and irrational.
15. The fact that despite feeding the bulk of their hard earned and hard borrowed capital to the war machinery of mass destruction, India and Pakistan have failed to capture Kashmir and aspirations for independence have grown stronger under both armies shows that Indian and Pakistani occupation in Kashmir is the major cause not only of the poverty, deprivation and under development but also

the extremism and hatred in the Indian and Pakistani societies from where it spilled over to Kashmir and to the world through diaspora.

16. Both India and Pakistan are not in Kashmir for the protection of Kashmiris from the 'other' but for the resources of Kashmir mainly water but also minerals and forests. The mass migration especially from 'Azad' Kashmir to UK, Europe, America, Canada and Middle East has also added the foreign exchange and access to the political and economic markets and power corridors as reasons for not leaving Kashmir.
17. The governments of India and Pakistan are unlikely to give Kashmiris the right to decide their future independently unless there is a pressure from the citizens of India, Pakistan and the wider countries of South Asia and world for resolving Kashmir tangle through a fair and democratic manner.
18. Therefore, in the final argument Kashmir is not an issue of being integral part of any of the occupying countries or that of 'property ownership'. It is an issue of universally recognised, accepted and acknowledged human and democratic right of over 16 million people across the divided state and Kashmiri diaspora around the world. All

people who care for human rights, peace, democracy, freedom, independence, self determination, tolerance, liberty, equality, integration, respect, progress, prosperity and development must support the right of Kashmiri people to self determination without any restrictions whatsoever. In other words Kashmir is for Kashmiris – all of them – state subjects/ citizens of the divided state.

Kashmir Problem A democratic Solution?

Kashmir is an artificially constructed country with many regions and communities that have nothing in common. There can not be one referendum for all regions and communities. All people in the state don't want one thing.

This is the latest tendency emerging from the Indian and Pakistani official discourse on Kashmir that can be described as dis-integrationist if viewed from the unified independent Kashmir perspective and perhaps multiple self-dterminationist if seen from a wider South Asian approach. For the argument which indicates to such a tendency claims that due to the multiplicity the option of a united independent sovereign Kashmir cannot considered in bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir question. Interestingly both India and Pakistan appear in agreement over this claim as they did in their opposition to an independent Kashmir. However, while Indian efforts to undermine

independence of Kashmir by magnifying the multiple identities focuses on the diversity of political opinions in the state, especially in Jammu and Ladakh where there is vocal opposition to the Huriyat version of independent Kashmir as Valley centric and too close to the 'Two Nation Theory', Pakistan, a product of that theory puts greater emphasis over the Huriyat type tendencies in the resistance politics that praises Pakistan for supporting them in their uprising against Indian occupation. Huriyat Conference has never demonstrated any clarity on such issues as multiple identities and political pluralism. Indeed it seems that while they did issue a cautious statement over recent Pakistani moves to declare Gilgit Baltistan regions of Kashmir state as de facto province of Pakistan, they rarely try to address such questions as why Huriyat does not exist in Ladakh and Jammu and why even in Azad Kashmir it is composed exclusively of Valley Kashmiris. Even Yasin Malik a staunch proponent of independent Kashmir who heads JKLF after a split in early 1990s confined his high profile Safar e Azadi or Freedom March to the Valley. There are strong and vocal voices in Jammu, Ladakh and Gilgit Baltistan against this Valley centric Kashmiri nationalism. One possible reason for the silence of Huriyat and evasion of JKLF in the valley about the questions of diversity is the fact that while they are continuation of the

independence sentiment, their politics is shaped more by the religious Islamic political ideology than the national political tradition mainly because the national tradition has been championed by the National Conference (NC) within the framework of Indian secularism and Congress nationalism. Therefore, for Huriyat Ladakh, Jammu and AJK and GB are the headaches of those who want an inclusive united Kashmir State. For Huriyat the Kashmir Valley is the Kashmir and it is ok for them if the Valley becomes independent or goes with Pakistan. It seems that Pakistan would probably welcome the independence of Valley from India with expectations that Valley will have close relations with Pakistan. That is why the Huriyat and Pakistani establishment find natural allies in each other. However, this version of Kashmiri independence politics is not acceptable to those in Azad Kashmir and to some extent those in Gilgit Baltistan. They would like to become independent in a united Kashmir State or United States of Kashmir or autonomous within that state and not to merge with India or Pakistan.

In this context the question posed by the Indian and Pakistani officialdom and academia to the independent Kashmir discourse seems only reflecting the contemporary realities of Kashmiri State with division of Kashmir between India and

Pakistan as the only viable solution. Indeed the solution to Kashmir based on autonomy has also been described as the best possible and achievable solution by many South Asians on the left. I heard of this first from the renowned British Pakistani revolutionary activist and analyst Traiq Ali at a Marxist gathering in 1995.

However, when discussing division it appears that the major fault line runs through religious differences rather than regions or cultures which means the extension of two nation theory and acceptance of Pakistani claim over the state's Muslim regions that of course cannot be acceptable to India so Indian perspective would argue for united autonomous but not sovereign Kashmir. Pakistan also has no objection to the united Kashmir state as long as it's united within the jurisdiction of Pakistan. Merger of the entire state with India is not acceptable to a significant section of Muslim population and accession to Pakistan is vehemently opposed by the Pundits of the Valley, Hundus of Jammu and Buddhists of Ladakh and a very large numbers of Muslims in Valley, 'Azad' (free) Kashmir (the Pakistani Occupied Southern Kashmir) and Gilgit Baltistan (the Pakistani Occupied Northern Kashmir).

In an attempt to address the complex situation General Pervez Musharaf floated a 'win win' proposal characterised by demilitarization, self-

governance and freedom of movement and a Joint mechanism consisting of Indian, Pakistani and Kahsmiri representatives for defense, communication and foreign affairs. The recent Wiki leaks have indicated that this was almost agreed by the Indian and Pakistani governments with most Kashmiri leadership on board. It's only ironic that policies in Pakistan are continuously given birth by and die with individuals rather than institutions.

In this context the new trend in the Indian and Pakistani approach to resolve the issue of Kashmir on the basis of cultural diversity seems a positive step forward and needs reciprocation from the proponents of independent Kashmir, especially those who claim that the issue of Kashmir is that of justice and democratic rights for people and is hindering the progress and development of Kashmiris as well as of the wider South Asians .

The summary of such a solution offered below incorporates the suggestions floated by Parvez Musharaf (despite him being a dictator) that were considerably favored by Jag Mohan a democratically elected Indian premier. However, the proposal presented here argues that such a solution should be accomplished through a democratic mechanism which gives the State Subjects across the Kashmir state an opportunity to express their aspirations. If the problem with

Independence politics is that it does not represent all or majority of the people of Valley, Ladakh, Jammu, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, any alternative must do that beyond any reasonable doubt. For this the people of these regions should be given a fair and transparent chance and choice to elect their representatives who then chose Statewide Representative Body that should negotiate with the Indian and Pakistani representatives under some type of democratic international auspices of UN or some other mutually agreed body or panel. For this purpose India and Pakistan immediately need to take the following steps:

1. Enhance and expand trade and movement across the division line;
2. Release all political prisoners including the remains of Maqbool Bhatt and Afzal Guru from Tihar prison Delhi ;
3. Demilitarize the state by withdrawing all foreign armies and militant groups;
4. Introduce if any constitutional amendments are required for democratizing the existing setups in all five regions of the state namely the Hill Council of Ladakh, J&K Assembly, AJK Assembly and Gilgit Baltistan Assembly. There is no justification for evading the demand for an autonomous Jammu Assembly when all other regions

have their assemblies. The constitutions of these Kashmiri assemblies should have provisions that if any democratically elected assembly decides on the basis of two third majority to join any of the neighboring countries or neighboring assemblies they will have right to do so without giving up their autonomy if they so wish. Such controlling and colonial like bodies as Kashmir Council in AJK to be abolished and Act 74 be amended as well as all those regulations, laws and bodies enacted by the Indian government to control Kashmiri government;

5. Lift all restrictions on pro-independence Kashmiris' participation in elections at any level;
6. Lift all restrictions on Media, Assembly and Campaigning;
7. Invite independent observers;
8. Announce elections of all assemblies to be held simultaneously where possible;
9. If any assembly wants to join neighboring India or Pakistan (or China?) they should make such a decision within an agreed time scale;
10. The remaining assemblies, and if none opts out for any neighboring countries all, should elect their respective representatives for the State Assembly

that should then negotiate the future of the entire state.

In my view the best solution to Kashmir question is a united and democratic Kashmir with Kashmiriyat at the heart of its political and governance philosophy (our secularism) and regional autonomy for all the regional and administrative components of Kashmir state. However, if the majority of certain regions of Kashmir do not want to stay with the state and prefer joining India or Pakistan or China then democratically speaking no one should stop them. In relation to this form of self-determination that can be described as 'multiple self-determination' or 'grassroots self-determination' or 'self-determination from below', one question, however, remains to be answered.

Would this 'multiple self-determination' be confined to Kashmir only? What about the diversity and multiplicity within India and Pakistan that is even greater and sharper than, Kashmir? Will the devolution process be carried through the entire South Asia? After all Kashmir and all other distinct political entities form part of a wider south Asia with great deal in common and cannot exist in isolation. Are we moving towards the Indian communist party's solution to the colonial question that there is not 'one 'or 'two' nations in the Indian sub-continent but over a

dozen and all should be recognized, respected and incorporated in a federation of South Asia?

[i] It was around 1945 when I was 8 or 9 years old. At that time, a Dogra family ruled Kashmir and the whole of Kashmiri nation was living under slavery conditions. One of the cruel forms of slavery is the feudal system. In this system, the ruler or the king distributes land amongst his loyalists, who in turn become an instrument in carrying out the oppressive measure against ordinary people for him. It is this service, which is awarded by the rulers through land distribution. These lands or fields are called Jagirs. The Jagirdars, the owners, do not offer any labour or till the fields. The work of tilling, seeding, growing the crops is done by the local peasants. All a Jagirdar does is to appear at the harvest time and take all the produce leaving a minute quantity for the peasants to live on. This Jagirdari system existed in our country during the Dogra rule too. The poor peasants had to do all the hard work but the landowner would take all the produce. The landowner in our area was called Divan, whom we had seldom seen. There were his agents called kardaar, whose job it was to collect grain etc. once produced by the farmers. The year I am talking about had poor crops due to bad weather. This left the farming families with very little to give to the Divan. Having given away all the produce it did not mount up to the usual season's quantity, which brought the whole area under the wrath of his agents. They started a series of crackdowns on the houses and stores of the poor peasants and many were whipped. When it did not produce results, the Divan himself came to our village in a motorcade. This was the first time ever a motorcade came to our village. We were all amazed to see it. All the farmers in our village got together and pleaded before him for concession. They told him in detail the reasons for the low harvest but he did not believe them. He insisted upon having his usual share of the crops even if it meant that the children of the peasants had to starve to death. He also expressed his anger towards his agents and strictly instructed them to extract the full share. These agents knew very well that the peasants were left with nothing to be given to the Divan. However, (kardaars) had no courage to argue with their master. As the jagirdar went to his car after giving instructions all the children of the village were told to lie down on the road in front of the car by their elders. The kardaar was also part of this plan. Hundreds of village children lied down in front of the Jagirdar's car and pleaded for concession and to write off the extra share or drive over them. I was one of those children and remember

to this day the fear and chaos that ruled us. Everyone, young and old was in tears. They knew that if jagirdar left without giving concessions their lives would be made hell. Eventually, the jagirdar agreed to some concessions.

[ii] (For details see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Independence_Act_1947)

[iii] S/65I, DATED THE 17TH JANUARY 1948 and S/654, DATED THE 20TH JANUARY 1948).

[iv] S/726, DATED THE 21ST APRIL, 1948
[v] See UN commission resolutions of 13th August 1948 and 5th January 1949.